# *The Good Hope*

*by*

*Herman Heijermans*

# THE GOOD HOPE

## A DRAMA OF THE SEA
## IN FOUR ACTS

BY

HERMAN HEIJERMANS

Only authorized translation by

LILLIAN SAUNDERS AND
CAROLINE HEIJERMANS-HOUWINK

As presented by the Civic Repertory Theater, New York,
under the direction of

EVA LE GALLIENNE

Foreword by

J. BROOKS ATKINSON

SAMUEL FRENCH

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Following is a copy of program of the first performance of "THE GOOD HOPE" as produced by the Civic Repertory Theatre, New York, October 18, 1927, under the direction of Eva Le Gallienne.

THE CIVIC REPERTORY THEATRE
[EVA LE GALLIENNE, DIRECTOR]

presents

# THE GOOD HOPE
## A DRAMA OF THE SEA

By Herman Heijermans

Translated from the Dutch by Lilian Saunders and Caroline Heijermans-Houwink

CHARACTERS

(In order of their first appearance)

| | |
|---|---|
| Clementine | Josephine Hutchinson |
| Cobus | Sayre Crawley |
| Daantje | Robert Ross |
| Jelle | John Eldridge |
| Barend | Charles McCarthy |
| Kniertje | Alma Kruger |
| Jo | Eva Le Gallienne |
| Clemens Bos | Egon Brecher |
| Geert | Donald Cameron |
| Marietje | Beatrice de Neergaard |
| Simon | J. Edward Bromberg |
| Saart | Margaret Love |
| Mees | Alan Campbell |
| First Coastguard | Harold Moulton |
| Second Coastguard | Walter Tupper Jones |
| Truus | Leona Roberts |
| Kaps | Harry Sothern |
| Mathilde | Mary Ward |

Act I.—Kniertje's Cottage.
Act II.—Same (Two Weeks Later).
Act III.—Same (Six Weeks Later).
Act IV.—Office of Clemens Bos (One Week Later).
The action takes place in a North Sea fishing village in Holland.

Scenery by Cleon Throckmorton
Costumes designed by Millia Davenport
Executed by Emma Cashin

## FOREWORD

To understand the true measure of Heijermans' greatness we need only remember that he influenced social legislation. Less than a decade after the production of his sea drama, "The Good Hope," the Ships Act of 1909 remedied for the Dutch most of the abuses set forth in his play. Many playwrights succeed in quickening the torpid intellects of their audiences, and many of them earn large sums of money. But few of them strike to the quick so adroitly, with such passionate, perfervid emotion, that they leave the imprint of their thought permanently upon the political records of a nation. When Heijermans died in 1924 he left his widow and two children in straitened circumstances, for in spite of his dramatic and literary fecundity the Dutch public was too limited numerically to reward art according to its value. In gratitude for his services to labor, the crews of the Dutch merchant marine took up voluntary contributions for the Heijermans ménage. One can conceive of no finer tribute. In the final analysis the ideals of art and human life are one; when they blend perfectly, may we not regard their expression in a play as noble, majestic—as luminously true? Can life be more splendidly served?

Let us not dismiss Heijermans as a propagandist. If he turned the currents of Dutch political thought perceptibly it was because his instrument was art, and because his art sprang immediately from life.

Although "The Good Hope" reveals the criminal negligence in Dutch shipping laws of 1900 we still admire it, twenty-seven years later, because it communicates the beauties of character—of mariners old and young, of apprehensive women left at home, of fears and catastrophes, of coarse humors and jollifications. Under the spell of this tragedy, with its deep tonal values of a Dutch painting, we begin to understand something of life. For it is true in every detail of story, every line of dialogue, and particularly in every stroke of character—in its vivid panorama of a fishing village where the church bell is forever tolling the frightful news of death at sea.

In substance, "The Good Hope" chronicles the departure of a crew in a rotten schooner; in the last act it reports her loss at sea and reveals the agony of those who are left husbandless, loverless and sonless ashore. But in this play Heijermans was no spinner of salty yarns: he was a master of character. Accordingly, he told his fable in terms of the men and women of the fishing village—high-spirited, brave, strong and honestly vulgar. Most of the action passes inside the cottage of the dour mother of two boys who put out to sea in the superannuated schooner. There come the old mariners to drink and jest, the youngsters to dream of the future; and there, on a wickedly stormy night, come the women of the neighborhood—terrified by every blast—to chatter in hushed tones of what the sea has wrenched from their lives. Sometimes the talk is pothouse humor; sometimes it rises to rude poetry; sometimes it beats a snarling hatred of the dark fates that crowd their uncertain existence. For Heijermans matched their resilience with his own; he

wrote of them with compassionate understanding. "The Good Hope" burns with the white flame of life.

People who can write good plays are obviously more numerous than people who can write good plays about life. By close and purposeful study of the marketable models many good craftsmen can learn the necessary tricks of exposition, movement, suspense and climax; the rest is largely a matter of fortune. What we receive from such plays is frequently entertaining, but it is always stuffy and musty, a pale reproduction of familiar types and situations. Moreover, most of the authors who go to life, rather than to the theatre, for their material lack the facility of stage expression; they leave interpretation to their perplexed audiences, and they commit the cardinal sin of the playwright: they bore. Nothing is rarer than the author who has not only drawn his inspiration from life, but who has also the creative invention and the sense of stage expression necessary to full-blown drama. Heijermans belonged to that select company. Although he was the social mentor in his best plays he loved life more intensely than theses; he enjoyed the rough play of character, the animal spirits of the common people, and "The Good Hope" seethes with humor as well as hatred. When it is acted by those who understand its human values—as Eva LeGallienne's company does—"The Good Hope" provides the exhilarating, cathartic experience that discovers the theatre in its finest manifestation. We enjoy it, not only for the story, and the glow of its characters but for the reflection of the author's magnetic personality. To say, as many of us do, that great drama is impersonal is to forget that great personalities

inevitably rise above the familiar daily jumble of petty ambitions, jealousies and witticisms to universal expression. "The Great Hope" is personal in the grandest sense of the word: in its understanding of the profoundest universal truths. Although its immediate concern is with social justice and human character its final beauty is the pellucid reflection of a great personality.

Herman Heijermans was born in Rotterdam on December 3, 1864. He began his professional career in 1892 when he joined the staff of the Amsterdam Telegraaf as a reporter. His first play failed. In the humorous belief that foreign plays had a greater prestige in Holland he offered his second play as a translation from the Russian of one Ivan Jelakowitch. Whatever the reason may have been, the second play was well liked. Many of his subsequent plays enjoyed favor in London, Paris and Berlin, and at least two of them have been produced in New York. Heijermans was also a prolific writer of novels and short stories. He was held in deep affection by his countrymen. After his death a vast number of people lined the streets through which his funeral procession passed to pay their last reverent respects to a Dutch master.

J. Brooks Atkinson

New York, November 8, 1927

# THE GOOD HOPE

## ACT ONE

*A bare, poorly furnished room in* KNIERTJE'S *cottage. Right, two beds built into the wall and a door, leading outside. Left, a chest of drawers with holy images, photographs and small ornaments on it. Down stage, a fireplace. In the back a swinging door leading to the cooking shed . . . a cupboard with glass doors, a dove in a cage . . . a window with flower pots. It is afternoon.*

CLEMENTINE (*a sketch book on her knee*)
Now! Now! . . . Cobus!

COBUS (*waking with a start, smiling foolishly*)
Héhéhé! I wasn't asleep . . . no . . . no.

CLEMENTINE
Your head more this way. Still more. What is the matter with you? You were posing so well just now. Your hand on your knee. . . .

COBUS
Tja! When you sit still so long . . . you get to feeling funny.

CLEMENTINE (*impatiently*)
And if you please . . . *if you please*, stop chewing.



Austin College Library

COBUS

I . . . I ain't chewing . . . look for yourself.

CLEMENTINE

Keep your mouth shut, please.

DAANTJE (*coming in through the cooking shed*)

Good day, everybody!

CLEMENTINE

Good day. Please go take a walk around the block.

DAANTJE

No, juffrouw . . . it's getting late. (*looking at the drawing.*) Well, now, I wouldn't recognize him yet.

CLEMENTINE (*smiling*)

Ah?

DAANTJE (*setting his glasses straight*)

See now . . . if I may make so free . . . his chin sets different . . . and his eyes don't suit me. But the nose . . . that's *him* . . . and . . . and his necktie, that's top notch . . . that you could swear to!

CLEMENTINE

So?

DAANTJE

And the bed with the curtains . . . that's wonderful. (*takes a chew of tobacco.*) Couldn't you use me sometime?

CLEMENTINE

Perhaps. (*to* COBUS.) Your hand higher. Keep your mouth still.

COBUS

That's easy to say . . . but when you're used to chewing and you can't chew, then it's hard to hold your lips still. What do you say, Daantje?

DAANTJE

I say it's getting late. We eat at four o'clock and the matron is strict.

CLEMENTINE

That must be necessary with you old men.

DAANTJE

Peh! We haven't got a thing to say! (*snaps his fingers.*) Not that! The Old Folks Home makes me sick! Your grub handed to you with a snarl . . . like as if you were a beggar. Coffee this morning like . . . like the dregs of the rain barrel, and peas as hard as your corns!

CLEMENTINE

In your place . . . Keep your mouth still, Cobus . . . in your place I would thank God that I was taken care of in my old days.

COBUS

Tja—tja! You shouldn't complain. . . .

DAANTJE

Thank God? Not me! I've earned it . . . a sailor all my life . . . worked hard . . . so many trips I can't count 'em . . . been shipwrecked . . . been starved . . . on the sea since I was ten years old . . . and the sea got my two sons. Listen now! Lis-

ten now! The matron is a stinker. I'd like to punch her in the snoot.

CLEMENTINE

Come, come! You're not in a pot-house here.

DAANTJE

That I am not. But it sticks in your craw. Last week I couldn't go out, because . . . with your permission . . . I spit outside of the box. Now, I ask you, would you spit outside of the box on purpose? An Old Folks Home is a jail. They stick you in there and then they wash their hands of you. I wish I had been gobbled up decently by the sharks while I was still at sea!

COBUS (*giggling*)

Héhéhé! The sharks wouldn't like you, man. You're too tough.

DAANTJE

The sharks wouldn't like me? They would swallow a skeleton. Peh! I saw old Willem bitten in two by a shark before my eyes . . . so the blood spurted out of him! And he was skinny!

CLEMENTINE

Was old Willem eaten by a shark?

DAANTJE

By one? By six. The minute he fell overboard, they grabbed him. The water all around was red!

CLEMENTINE (*with an incredulous smile*)

How terrible! And yet . . . I would like to have

been there . . . to see a thing like that . . . that would be thrilling.

DAANTJE

Peh! You would like to have been there? We had to be there. . . .

CLEMENTINE

Did he scream? (*shuddering.*)

DAANTJE

*Did* he?

COBUS

Tja! You wouldn't scream if you felt those teeth in your behind? . . . héhéhé! (*violin is heard outside.* COBUS *jiggles up and down on his chair in time to the music.*) Ta-de—da-de . . . da-da-da!

CLEMENTINE (*shutting her sketch book in vexation*)

Now then. (*getting up.*) Tomorrow I hope you will be a little quieter.

COBUS (*stretching himself*)

Stiff all over! (*snapping his fingers, his legs shaking.*) Ta-de-da-da-da-da-da—!

DAANTJE (*speaking through the window*)

Pst! Nobody home.

JELLE

They expect me once a week.

DAANTJE

They've all gone down to the harbor.

CLEMENTINE
Here! (*throws some money out of the window.*)

JELLE (*stopping the music and groping in the dust for the coins*)
Thank you very much.

COBUS
Behind the stone, stupid.

DAANTJE
No, further over there.

CLEMENTINE
I threw it the other way. What a donkey! Is he so blind?

COBUS
He has only half an eye, and with half an eye you can't see much. Behind you there.

JELLE
I can't see it.

DAANTJE (*seeing* BAREND *from the window*)
Pst! Hé, Barend!—help him a little.

CLEMENTINE
There is ten cents there somewhere.

BAREND (*through the window*)
Why don't you give it to him in his paws?

BAREND (*to* JELLE)
Here.

JELLE

Thanks a thousand times, juffrouw. (*he walks away playing.*)

COBUS

Did you hear that impudent boy?

CLEMENTINE (*as* BAREND *enters*)

Say, you big ape, were you talking to me?

BAREND (*embarrassed*)

No, juffrouw, I didn't know you were here. I thought . . .

COBUS

You mustn't think . . . you should only think how you can get to sea quick and earn bread for your mother.

BAREND

That's none of *your* business.

COBUS

Listen how big he talks to me . . . but other places he just stands with his mouth full of teeth. Héhéhé! *I'M* not afraid . . . *I* don't get a pain in my belly when I have to go to sea!

DAANTJE

Come along now. It has struck four.

CLEMENTINE

Tomorrow at ten o'clock, Cobus.

DAANTJE

Can't be done, juffrouw. We have to scrape stones tomorrow.

CLEMENTINE
Scrape stones? That's something new. What is it?

DAANTJE
Why now, that's grubbing the weeds up in the court yard.

CLEMENTINE
Tomorrow afternoon then.

COBUS
Tja . . . I'll be there. (*taking a chew from* DAANTJE's *tobacco box.*) 'Day, juffrouw. (*to* BAREND.) 'Day, mollycoddle! Héhéhé!
[*The two old men go out.*

CLEMENTINE
They tease you all the time, don't they?

BAREND (*with an embarrassed laugh*)
Yes, juffrouw.

CLEMENTINE
Have you been down to the beach? (*he nods.*) Find much?

BAREND
No, it was ebbtide last night, and then . . . then . . .

CLEMENTINE
Are you really afraid to go to sea, silly boy? (*He nods, smiling shyly.*) But everybody goes.

BAREND (*dully*)
Yes, everybody goes.

CLEMENTINE
Well?

BAREND (*hesitating*)
I'd rather stay on shore.

CLEMENTINE
*I* wouldn't try to make you go. How old are you?

BAREND
Last month I was rejected for army service.

CLEMENTINE
Past eighteen then. (BAREND *nods.*) Why were you rejected?

BAREND
Because I . . . because I . . . I don't know why.

CLEMENTINE (*laughing*)
Well, it's a good thing . . . a soldier that's afraid isn't much use.

BAREND (*flaring up*)
On land I'm not afraid . . . just let 'em get in my way. . . . I'll put a knife through their ribs!

CLEMENTINE
Fine!

BAREND (*again embarrassed*)
Don't take it ill, juffrouw.
[*The faint whistle of a steam boat is heard.*
That's the Anna. There's a dead man on board. The flag was half-mast.

CLEMENTINE

Another? That's the second this week. First the Agatha Maria . . .

BAREND

No, it was the Charlotte.

CLEMENTINE

Oh, yes, the Agatha was the week before. Do they know who it is on the Anna? (*he shakes his head.*) Didn't you ask? Weren't you curious?

BAREND

Ach, you get so used to it . . . and none of our people were on board. (*gloomily.*) Not father . . . nor Joseph . . . nor Hendrik . . . they . . . you know about that. And Geert . . . he's still in jail.

CLEMENTINE

Yes. What a disgrace he has brought on all of you.

BAREND (*indignantly*)

Disgrace! Disgrace!

CLEMENTINE

When will he be out?

BAREND

We don't know.

CLEMENTINE

You don't know?

BAREND

They gave him six months . . . but they take off the

time before the trial and we don't know how long that was.

KNIERTJE (*through the window*)
'Day, juffrouw.

CLEMENTINE
Good day.

KNIERTJE (*to* BAREND)
How did the chickens get loose? Just look at that rooster! Get away, sallemander! Get away! Kischt! Jo! Jo!

BAREND
Let them alone. They'll go back of themselves.

KNIERTJE (*coming in*)
That's an everlasting torment, juffrouw. (*to* BAREND.) Come now, stir yourself! Stir yourself! We'll have another fuss with Arie.

BAREND (*indifferently*)
Then we'll have a fuss, that's all!
[*He goes out lazily—one sees him chasing the chickens outside.*

KNIERTJE
That's all! Such a good for nothing lump of a boy was never born! Lazy brat. Are you going already, juffrouw?

CLEMENTINE
I want to find out what has happened on board the Anna.

KNIERTJE

Yes, I was on my way there, too, but it may be a a long time before she's in and I have my belly full of waiting on the pier . . . if the pier could talk! Are you through with the picture of my brother?

CLEMENTINE

Tomorrow. I would like to sketch Barend too . . . as he came in just now with the basket of wood on his shoulders.

KNIERTJE

Barend? It's all the same to me.

CLEMENTINE

He doesn't seem to get much petting here.

KNIERTJE

Petting? I should say not! The sooner I get rid of him the better. (*through the window.*) Go after them now! Kischt! Kischt!

BAREND

The rooster is frightened at all that yelling.

KNIERTJE

Frightened? Then he takes after you! Kischt!

CLEMENTINE

Hahaha! Now he's sitting on Arie's roof.

JO (*coming in through the door . . . brown apron . . . digging irons in her dirty hands*)

'Day, juffrouw.

KNIERTJE (*snappishly*)

The chickens are loose. The rooster is sitting up on Arie's roof.

JO (*gaily*)

Hahaha! He won't lay any eggs there.

KNIERTJE

Listen to her. And she knows how near we came to a fight the last time they got into Arie's potato field.

JO

I let them out myself, old grumbler. Truus dug her potatoes yesterday.

KNIERTJE

Why didn't you say so right away then.

JO

Now, then what have I done this time! Oh, juffrouw, she only feels natural when she has something to grumble about. At night when she's asleep she growls out loud. Last night she was cursing in her dreams. Hahaha! But go ahead! Snarl all you want to. You're a good old soul. (*to* BAREND, *who enters.*) Ach, you poor thing! Is the rooster on the roof? And he won't come down?

BAREND

Now, you . . . shut up!

JO

I bet if you make love to his little hens he'll be jealous

and come skipping down of himself. Hahaha! See how white he gets. He's afraid of the rooster!

CLEMENTINE

Now, now!

JO

He ought to be a baker, hé, tante? With his little white feet in the rye meal. Hahaha!

BAREND

You . . . you can all go to the devil—
[*Goes off in a rage.*

JO (*calling after him teasingly*)

Poor little thing!

CLEMENTINE

Now don't plague him so. Have you been digging potatoes?

JO

Since four o'clock this morning. Work wasted, tante . . . all withered and rotten.

KNIERTJE

Bad luck lodges with the poor. Rain and rain . . . nothing but rain. Everything had to rot . . . no help for it, and we start into the winter like that . . . the hard, hard winter. . . . Ach, ach, ach!

JO

Now there you go, grumbling again. Please laugh a little. Am I so doleful? And—Geert may come any minute now. . . .

KNIERTJE
Geert . . . and then what?

JO
Then what? Then . . . Then . . . why nothing. Be cheerful. You won't get one potato more by fussing and crying. Yes, I have to talk to her like that all day long. I caught a rabbit.

CLEMENTINE
In a trap?

JO
Just like that! (*snaps her fingers.*) The rascal wanted to eat off of us, poor as we are. Good enough! We should let ourselves be plundered! While I was busy digging, the spring went "snap" . . . he's a fat one, I tell you . . . forty cents at least.

CLEMENTINE
That's fine. I must go now.

BOS (*at the door*)
Hallo! (*To* CLEMENTINE.) Are you taking up your lodging here? May I come in, Knier?

KNIERTJE (*amiably*)
Of course, meneer. If you please, meneer.

BOS
I have dirty boots, children.

KNIERTJE (*agreeably*)
That's nothing, meneer. Dry sand does no harm. Take a seat, meneer.

BOS

I won't say no to that. (*lowers himself rheumatically into a chair.*) Yes, Knier, my girl, we are getting older every day. Good day, Jo.

[*Holds out his hand.*

JO

'Day, meneer. You see. . . .

[*She shows her dirty hands laughing.*

BOS

Are you going to a ball with those little black gloves?

JO (*nods impudently—dances a step or two*)

The hornpipe and the schotsche drij.

BOS

Hahaha! You are a cheeky little black eyes! Now, let's have a look, Clementine.

CLEMENTINE (*impatiently*)

No. You don't know anything about such things.

BOS

Oh, thank you! Raise a daughter till she's grown up —have her taught drawing, but keep your nose out of it. Come! Don't act so childish!

[*Takes hold of the drawing.*

CLEMENTINE

No. When it is finished.

BOS

Just a look.

CLEMENTINE (*pulling the drawing away*)
Now, father, don't bother me.

BOS
Always I get a scolding, hahaha!

BAREND (*coming in hesitatingly*)
'Day, meneer.

BOS
Barendje, you come as if you were called.

BAREND
Me?

BOS
We have need of you, little fellow.

BAREND
Good, meneer.

BOS (*touching his lip*)
The deuce, something is beginning to grow here.

BAREND (*embarrassed*)
Yes, meneer.

BOS
You're getting to be a big fellow. How long have you been out of work now?

BAREND
Eight months.

KNIERTJE
He is lying. It is more than a year.

BAREND
That isn't true!

JO
It is so. Count it up yourself . . . November, December . . .

BOS
Now, now children! No quarrelling! Life is too short. Well, Barendje, how would you like to sail on 47? What?

BAREND (*in alarm*)
The 47?

BOS
The Good Hope.

CLEMENTINE (*astonished*)
The Good Hope? Are you going to—

BOS (*sharply*)
Keep out of this! Keep out of this, I say!

CLEMENTINE
But just this morning . . . you said—

BOS (*angrily*)
Clementine!

CLEMENTINE
But father . . .

BOS (*stamping his foot heavily*)
Will you be good enough to get out of here!

CLEMENTINE (*shrugging her shoulders*)

How absurd to get so angry about nothing! How petty! Good-by.

KNIERTJE

'Day, juffrouw.

BOS (*laughing*)

Exactly like her mother . . . a little cat. Yes, now and then I have to put my foot down, hahaha! Otherwise my wife and daughter would be running the fleet and I would sit in the kitchen peeling potatoes, hahaha! Not that I haven't done that often enough in my young years.

KNIERTJE

As if I didn't remember that. . . .

BOS

Taters with fresh herring! (*smacks his lips.*) But that's all past long ago, long ago. With a fleet of eight luggers you have your mind on other things . . . (*smiling*) though I still like to look at a pair of pretty black eyes, little impudence! Will you let me say that? Not dangerous! Had my time. . . . Hahaha!

KNIERTJE

Say anything you like. . . .

BOS

And our little friend here?

KNIERTJE

Open your mouth, can't you?

BAREND
I'd rather . . .

KNIERTJE (*snappishly*)
Rather . . . rather! . . .

JO
Hé, what a lout!

BOS
Children, no squabbling! My boy, you must decide for yourself. The crew is complete . . . all but one. Hengst is skipper . . . the second boy, the younker, the rope-shooter . . . all engaged . . . the skipper thought of you as head boy . . . now what do you say, little man?

BAREND (*hesitating nervously*)
No . . . no, meneer.

KNIERTJE
Oh what a stubborn, dirty brat! I can't drive him on board with a whip!

JO
If I was a man . . .

BOS
Yes, but you're not a man . . . you're a pretty girl! Hahaha! We can't use such pretty little sailors. And why don't you want to go, little fellow? Afraid of sea-sickness? But you've already made one trip as younker and one as net-boy.

KNIERTJE
He's best as playboy, meneer!

JO

He'd rather loaf around and bum his living. The little milk-sop!

BOS

You are acting very foolishly, my boy. I sailed at your age with your grandfather. . . . Oh, yes, then I would rather have sat by mother's pap-pot too, instead of handling live bait with hands like lumps of ice . . . and I would rather have bitten into a piece of bread and butter than bite off the heads of the bait . . . and your father . . .

BAREND (*hoarsely*)

My father was drowned . . . and my brother Joseph . . . and my brother Hendrik . . . no, I won't go.

BOS (*his manner friendly*)

Well, if that is the way he feels, it's better not to force him, Mother Kniertje. I can sympathize with him. My father didn't die in his bed either. But if you reason it out like that, the whole fishing business would go to pot. . . .

KNIERTJE (*angrily*)

It is enough to . . .

BOS

You don't catch fuddled herring by knocking them on the head. . . .

JO (*laughing*)

Fuddled herring! That's something I'd like to see!

BOS (*laughing*)

She doesn't understand that, Knier. We know, eh?

KNIERTJE

Ach, ach . . . I don't think it's a thing to joke about, meneer. That wretched boy talks as if I had forgotten my husband, and the good Joseph, and . . . but I have not forgotten . . . no. . . .

[*She ends by sobbing softly.*

JO

Silly woman! Please! Tanteje dear! (*to* BAREND.) You coward! You *booby!* You whining fool!

BOS

Don't cry, Knier. You can't bring the dead to life by crying.

KNIERTJE

No, meneer. I know that, meneer. Next month it will be twelve years since the Clementine was lost—

BOS

Yes, the Clementine . . . in 1888.

KNIERTJE

In November, 1888. Barend was seven then. Would such an ape remember better than I would?

BAREND (*nervously*)

I didn't say I did. I don't even remember my father's face . . . nor my brothers . . . but . . . but . . .

BOS

Well, then?

BAREND

I want another trade . . . not on the sea . . . no. . . .

KNIERTJE

Another trade? Do you know anything else? You can't even read or write.

BAREND

Is that my fault?

KNIERTJE

No, it's mine. For three years I had the pension . . . the first year three gulden a week, the second year, two fifty, the third, two-twenty-five. The other nine years I had to scratch for myself.

BOS

Do you forget me?

KNIERTJE

I shall always be thankful to you for your help, meneer. If I couldn't have worked for you and the pastor and got a little money and a few scraps to take home . . . I . . . I . . . and that dirty brat holds it against me that I . . .

BAREND

I don't hold anything against you . . . I . . . I will do anything . . . dig sand . . . plant grass on the dykes . . . salt down fish . . . I would like to be a carpenter, or a mason, or an errand boy. . . .

JO

Or a burgermeester, or a policeman. Hahaha! And run around in the dark at night to catch little thieves. What a big man!

BOS (*laughing*)
Little impudence!

BAREND (*beside himself*)
You go to the devil! Have you ever heard me complain? Did I say a word when the salt ate the flesh off my hands and I couldn't sleep for the pain?

KNIERTJE
Be a mason! The boy is crazy. Be a carpenter! How many times masons have accidents! Every trade has something.

BOS
Yes, Barendje . . . risks of the trades. . . . The miners, the engineers, the stokers, think how they . . . and how often, even at my age I climb the rigging! How often I row out to the lugger with waves breaking over our little boat! Foolishness, little man! You mustn't give up to it.

KNIERTJE
And we haven't any choice. God alone knows what the winter will be . . . all the potatoes are rotten, meneer.

BOS
Yes, it's so in the whole district. Well, youngster?

BAREND
No, meneer.

KNIERTJE
Then you can just get out of my house . . . lazy lubber!

BAREND (*dully*)
All right, mother.

KNIERTJE
March! (*threateningly.*) I could . . .

BOS
Come, come!

JO
If I had a son like that . . .

BOS
Better get yourself a sweetheart first.

JO (*merrily*)
I've got one! If I had a son like that I'd box his ears right and left! Bah! A coward! A sailor knows that sooner or later . . . but he just don't think about it. If Geert was like that . . . I know what I'd do. . . . Think, tante . . . *Geert!*

BOS
Geert?

JO
He'd stand up to the devil! . . . wouldn't he, tante? Well, now I'm going back to the potatoes. Goodby, meneer.

BOS
Say, Black-eyes, do you laugh all the time?

JO (*with a burst of laughter*)
No, I'm going to cry now. Good-by! (*turning back at the door.*) tante, speak to him about Geert.

BOS

Geert . . . is that your son who . . .

KNIERTJE

Yes, meneer.

BOS

Six months for insubordination?

KNIERTJE

Yes, meneer . . . couldn't keep his hands to himself.

BOS

The stupid young fool.

KNIERTJE

I think they must have done something to him.

BOS

Nonsense. That's no excuse! Discipline would be thrown to the sharks if a sailor could hand out fisticuffs whenever something didn't please him.

KNIERTJE

That's true enough, meneer, but . . .

BOS

And is she sweet on that good-for-nothing?

KNIERTJE

She is crazy about him. And that's all right. He's a fine young fellow . . . just like his father . . . and strong! There stands his photograph. He was still wearing his uniform then . . . first class . . . now he is . . .

BOS

Reduced in rank?

KNIERTJE

Suspended from service! The sailor collar looked so beautiful on him! He was in India twice. It is hard . . . when he comes back next week . . . or in two weeks . . . or tomorrow . . . I don't know when . . . then I'll have him on my hands too. Although . . . although . . . that I must say for him . . . he won't let the grass grow under his feet. Such a giant can find a skipper anywhere.

BOS

Well, I'll tell you plainly, Knier . . . I'd rather not take him. There are too many such discontented rascals these days. Those that come from the Marines . . . it's the God-damned truth . . . they are red to the bone . . . and I won't have Reds around me. Am I right?

KNIERTJE

Of course, meneer. But my boy . . .

BOS

Now, now! . . . they're all alike. There was hunchbacked Jacob . . . the skipper had to throw him out too. Dissatisfied with everything . . . accused me of juggling my accounts. . . . Yes, yes. He was crazy. Now he's trying what he can do in Maassluis. We don't stand such nonsense.

KNIERTJE

Can I send him directly to the skipper . . . or to the water-bailiff's office.

BOS

You must make him understand—

KNIERTJE

Yes, meneer.

BOS

If he comes in time he can go on the Good Hope. She's just off the dry docks . . . she'll bring a full cargo back . . . you know that.

KNIERTJE (*happily*)

Yes, meneer.

BOS

Well, goodby.

[*A confusion of voices outside.*

What is that?

KNIERTJE

People coming back from the harbor. The Anna has a dead man on board.

BOS

Pietersen's steam trawler? Too bad. Who is it?

KNIERTJE

I don't know. I'll go find out.

*The stage is empty. Outside there is a vague tumult of voices.* FISHERMEN *pass the window talking together. A church bell tolls.* GEERT *slips in through the door, looks around, opens the cook shed door, peers through the window, throws down a bundle tied in a red handkerchief, and plumps himself down in a chair by the table, rests his head on his hand, muttering under his*

*breath . . . gets up restlessly, finds a loaf of bread in the closet, cuts a slice and comes back to the table, chewing . . . lets the bread fall and stares in front of him. The church bell ceases.*

BAREND
Who is it? Geert!

GEERT (*gruffly*)
Yes, it's me. Well, can't you give us your paw?

BAREND (*grips his hand*)
Have you . . . have you seen mother?

GEERT
No, where is she?

BAREND
Mother . . . she . . . she . . .

GEERT
Why do you look at me that stupid way?

BAREND
You . . . you . . . have you been sick?

GEERT
Sick? I never get sick.

BAREND
You . . . you look so white.

GEERT
Why don't you say like a dead man! Give me the looking-glass. The devil . . . what a face!
[*Throws the mirror down angrily.*

BAREND (*anxiously*)
Was it so bad in prison?

GEERT
No . . . it was nice. They stuff you with beefsteak. Is there any gin in the house?

BAREND
No.

GEERT
Then go get some. If I don't get a drop soon, I'll keel over.

BAREND (*timidly*)
I haven't got any money.

GEERT (*fumbling in his pocket*)
I've got plenty. (*throws a handful of coins on the table.*) Earned that in prison. There. . . .

BAREND
From the Red-head around the corner?

GEERT
What the devil do I care . . . just so you hurry. (*calling after him.*) Is . . . is mother well? (BAREND *nods.*) And Jo?

BAREND
She is digging potatoes.

GEERT
Have they got a grudge against me?

BAREND
What for?

GEERT
Because I . . . (*angrily.*) Don't stare at me like an idiot!

BAREND (*embarrassed*)
I can't get used to your queer face.

GEERT
Queer face? Because I haven't got my goat beard! Did they make a row when I—(*gruffly.*) Well?

BAREND
I don't know.

GEERT
Go to hell! You don't know anything.
[*A silence . . .* BAREND *slips away.*

JO (*coming in with the dead rabbit in her hand*)
Jezis! Geert!
[*She drops the rabbit, flies to him, throws her arms around his neck and bursts into tears.*

GEERT (*dully*)
Let up now! Stop that damned bawling! Stop it, I say!

JO
I am so happy! I am so happy, Geert, dear.

GEERT (*grimly*)
Now! Now!

JO
I can't help it!
[*She cries harder.*

GEERT (*loosening her arms from his neck*)
Now then! Let up! My head can't stand all that racket!

JO (*startled*)
All that racket?

GEERT (*sullenly*)
Of course you don't understand . . . six months alone . . . all alone in your stinking black cell. (*holding his hand before his eyes.*) Pull down that curtain a little . . . the sun here is enough to drive you crazy!

JO
God . . . Geert!

GEERT
Please, now . . . that's better.

JO
Your beard? . . .

GEERT
My beard didn't please them. Look ugly, don't I? Look as if I had been buried and dug up, don't I?

JO (*between laughing and crying*)
No . . . no! Why do you say that? Nobody would notice. . . .
[*She begins crying softly again.*

GEERT
Well, the devil! Is that all you can say to me? (*she laughs nervously . . . he points to his temples.*) Turned gray, eh?

JO

No, Geert.

GEERT

You lie! (*kicking the mirror away.*) I see it myself. The scoundrels, to shut a decent seaman up in a kennel—where you can't walk, where you can't talk, where you can't see. . . . (*strikes the table with his fist in a rage.*)

BAREND

Here is the gin.

JO

The gin?

BAREND

For Geert.

GEERT

You keep out of this. (*drinks greedily from the bottle.*) That puts life into a fellow!

JO

Were you eating bread? Were you hungry?

GEERT

Yes. No. Yes. I don't know.
[*Raises the bottle to his lips again.*

JO

Please Geert . . . not any more . . . you can't stand it.

GEERT

Not any more? (*drinks.*) Great! That's the best lin-

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ing for your stomach. No kick yet! (*drinks again.*) Great! Don't look so wild, girl! I won't get drunk. Bah! It stinks! Not used to it! Are there any provisions on board?

JO

Oh yes. Look at this. A fat fellow, eh? I caught it myself . . . not an hour ago.

GEERT

That will do for tomorrow. (*to* BAREND.) Here, take this and buy something . . . some ham and fresh meat. . . .

BAREND

Meat?

JO

No, that's extravagant . . . if you want to buy meat, keep your money for Sunday.

GEERT

Sunday! Sunday! When I haven't had anything to eat for six months but black bread, horse beans and rotten fish! I'm too weak to set one foot before the other. Don't stand there jawing! Shut up! And a hunk of cheese . . . I'd like to eat myself into a colic. Hahaha! Shall I have another little drop?

[BAREND *goes off.*

JO

No.

GEERT

Then no little drop. Is there any tobacco?

JO

God, how glad I am that you are jolly . . . like yourself again! . . . Yes, there is tobacco in the jar.

GEERT

Fine! Great! Is that my old pipe?

JO

I kept it for you.

GEERT

And who have you been carrying on with while I was away?

JO (*gaily*)

With Uncle Cobus!

GEERT

What trash you women are. (*takes a long pull at the pipe.*) Half a year that I haven't had that taste in my mouth. (*blows out a cloud of smoke.*) That isn't tobacco . . . it's like hay! The gin stinks and the tobacco stinks. . . .

JO

If you would eat something first. . . .

[*A pause.*

GEERT (*putting down the pipe*)

Do you still sleep with tante?

JO

Right next to the pig-pen. We've got little pigs.

GEERT (*laughing*)

And must I sleep up under the roof again?

JO
It's nice and warm there, boy.

KNIERTJE (*from outside*)
Why is the curtain down?

JO (*standing in front of* GEERT, *her finger on her lips*)
Sst!

KNIERTJE (*coming in*)
What are you doing? What happened to the looking-glass? Who is sitting there?

GEERT (*standing up*)
Hello, old girl!

KNIERTJE (*startled*)
God Almighty!

GEERT
No . . . it's me . . . Geert.

KNIERTJE
Oh, what a heart thumping I get from that!

GEERT
Hahaha! That's damn good!
[*tries to hug her.*

KNIERTJE
No . . . not yet . . . wait a minute. . . .

GEERT (*angrily*)
Wait a minute? What for?

KNIERTJE (*reproachfully*)
What have you ever done in your life to make me happy?

JO (*soothingly*)
Don't talk like that now.

GEERT
Are you going to begin on me right away? I've had enough to stand . . . if you do . . .

KNIERTJE
If I do? . . .

GEERT
I'll pick up my bundle and be off.

KNIERTJE (*despairingly*)
And that's the way he comes home!

GEERT
Would you like me to sit on the sinner's bench? No thank you!

KNIERTJE (*almost crying*)
The whole village has been talking about the disgrace . . . all the time you were gone . . . I couldn't go out on an errand without . . .

GEERT (*harshly*)
Whoever has anything to say about me can say it to my face. I'm not a thief . . . nor a—

KNIERTJE
No, but you raised your hand against your betters.

GEERT (*furiously*)
I ought to have wrung his neck!

KNIERTJE
Boy, boy . . . you'll bring misfortune on all of us!

GEERT (*stamping back and forth*)

You too! Treated like a beast in prison and then bedeviled here! (*snatches up his bundle.*) I'm not in the humor to . . . to take anything from you. (*hesitates near the door, drops his bundle.*) Now! Don't cry, mother. Damn it!

JO

Please, tante dear . . .

KNIERTJE

Your father lies somewhere in the sea he had plenty to put up with while he was alive . . . he would never have looked at you again. . . .

GEERT

I'm glad I'm not like him. Not so submissive. . . . A great honor to let yourself be walked on! I haven't got fish blood in my veins. Now then? Are we going to have more rain?

KNIERTJE (*throwing her arms around his neck*)

If you would only come to yourself!

GEERT (*rebelliously*)

I'd knock his teeth down his throat again tomorrow!

KNIERTJE

What was it that happened, Geert?

JO

Yes, now! Tell us all about it. Come and sit down quietly. . . .

GEERT

I've been sitting long enough . . . hahaha! Let me

walk up and down . . . so I'll get in the way of it again. (*lighting his pipe again.*) Bah!

JO

Why do you smoke it then, donkey!

GEERT

Better than nothing! . . . Now, if it hadn't been for you it would never have happened.

JO (*laughing*)

Well, that's good!

GEERT

Good! . . . good! I had warned you against him. . . .

JO

Against who? What are you talking about?

GEERT

Against that dirty dog . . . don't you remember that you danced with him in Red-head's saloon that night?

JO

Danced? Me?

GEERT

The night before we sailed.

JO

That cross eyed Quartermaster? I don't know what you mean. . . . Was it him that you . . . But you told me to, yourself . . .

GEERT

Can you say "no" to your superior officer? . . . On board ship he told dirty lies. . . . I heard him tell the skipper that he . . .

JO (*angrily*)

What?

GEERT

That he . . . what the hell! He talked as if you were "first come, first served" with all the sailors!

JO

Me? The dirty liar!

GEERT

When he came below after the dog-watch I hammered him in the snoot with a belaying pin . . . five minutes later I was in irons . . . six days of that, because the detention cell was full . . . then fourteen days detention . . . then six months prison . . . and forbidden for ten years to serve in the Royal Marines! And that, God damn it, is the worst! I'd let both hands be chopped off to get back again . . . yes, to get back! . . . to be treated like a slave again . . . to be cursed out like a tramp again, to be ground down like a nigger again! . . .

KNIERTJE

Geert, Geert, don't say such things! In the Bible it is written . . .

GEERT

There's nothing written in the Bible for us!

KNIERTJE

Shame on you!

JO

Isn't he right?

KNIERTJE

If he had gone respectfully to the Commander . . .

GEERT

Hahaha! You ought to have been a sailor, mother! Hahaha! Respectfully! They were glad to get me into their clutches! While I was in the detention cell, they found newspapers among my things . . . newspapers that we weren't allowed to read . . . and pamphlets that we weren't allowed to read . . . that shut the door on me tight. Otherwise they would only have reduced my rank. . . .

KNIERTJE

Papers that you weren't allowed to read? Why did you read them then?

GEERT

Why? You good old soul! When I look at your meek face, I hardly know how to tell you why. I can't hold it against you . . . you didn't know any better and I liked the fine uniform . . . but now that I have brains in my head I would like to warn everybody. . . . A boy . . . to bind himself for fourteen years to murder!

KNIERTJE

To murder! Boy, don't say such frightful things!

GEERT

Yes, murder! I fought in the Atjeh campaign and got the Atjeh medal . . . for murder . . . ran poor fellows through with my bayonet so the blood spurted in my eyes! . . . (*jerks his bundle open.*) Where is that thing? (*throws it violently out of the window.*) There it goes! It has rattled on my chest long enough!

[BAREND *comes in and stands listening.*

KNIERTJE

Geert, Geert! What has made you like this. I don't know you any more. Who . . .

GEERT

Who? Who trapped a green youngster and bound him to serve in the navy for fourteen years? Who trained him and drilled him and fitted him to that dog's life and then kicked him out of the only life he was fit for like the dog they had made him! Who put him in irons because he took up for his girl! You ought to have seen them . . . those irons . . . you ought to have seen me walking in them, whimpering like an animal, chained to another animal with irons on his paws too . . . because he had been cheeky to the officer of the watch!

JO

Don't talk about it any more . . . you are so weak yet.

GEERT (*sunk in the grimness of his memories*)

The detention cell . . . that stinking black hole that makes a pig-stye seem like a palace . . . a hole with-

out light . . . a hole where you can't stand up straight . . . where you can't lie down! A hole where they throw you your bread and water. . . . "Here, dog, eat" . . . !
There was a storm once . . . I thought I was going down to hell . . . that I'd never see any of you again . . . not you . . . nor you . . . nor you! down to hell in that stinking dark hole. No, let me talk it out . . . it does me good. Another mouthful! (*He drinks quickly.*) From the detention cell to the court martial! . . . You don't have much chance there! "Hold your tongue!" "Stand up straight!" "Give your answer!" "Hold your tongue again!" Gold epaulettes sitting up in judgment over the trash that God has created to serve, to salute, to bow the head! . . .

KNIERTJE

Boy, boy! . . .

GEERT

Six months! Six months to reform me! To reform me with grub that I couldn't swallow . . . three months pasting paper bags, so hungry that when I got a chance I gobbled the sour paste . . . three months sorting peas . . . and . . . now you won't believe me but I hope to never see the sea again if I lie . . . at night, over the gas jet, I cooked the peas I had swiped during the day . . . in my slop pail! I ate them half raw . . . at least they filled my belly! All that to reform you . . . to reform you because you got mad and beat up a blackguard that called

your girl a huzzy, and because you read papers that you weren't allowed to read.

KNIERTJE (*anxiously*)
That's really unjust.

GEERT
Unjust! How dare you say that! Fresh from the sea . . . flung into a cell . . . no wind, no water, no air! A little window with a grating high up in the wall, no bigger than a door in a birdcage . . . and the stink of the dirty bucket . . . the nights—the awful nights when you couldn't sleep . . . when you jumped up and paced like a crazy man, back and forth, back and forth . . . four steps each way . . . and the nights when you sat and prayed . . . prayed not to go mad . . . and cursed everything . . . everything!
[*He lets his head fall on his hands and bursts into sobs.*

JO (*after a long silence*)
Geert!
[KNIERTJE *is crying.* BAREND *stands stolidly.*

GEERT
Now! Let's not . . . (*speaks harshly to keep back his tears.*) Give us a match. (*Smokes.*) Now, mother! (*saunters to the window.*) Put your goodies down, Barend. (*pulls up the curtain.*) The God damned rooster is sitting on the roof. Haha! Will you believe now, that I would like to go to sea right away? Two days of the sea, the sea, the sea . . . and I'm as good as ever? Why is Truus going along crying? Truus!

KNIERTJE

Sst! Don't call her! The Anna has just come in without her husband.

[*Some women, talking softly, walk past the window.*

The poor creature! Six children!

GEERT

Is Arie? . . .

[*She nods.*

That's a damned shame!

[*Lets the window curtain fall, stands looking down thoughtfully.*

*Curtain.*

## ACT TWO

*Two weeks later.*

*Same scene as before.*

JO (*setting the table as* SIMON *and* MARIETJE *enter*)
Hé!

MARIETJE
'Day. . . . They're not here yet?

SIMON
No, they're not here yet.
[*Turns to go.*

JO
Are you going already?

SIMON
Well, that's to say. . . .

MARIETJE
Jezis, father, stay a little while now.

SIMON
All right . . . I'll wait outside the door . . . I must . . . I must—

MARIETJE
You must nothing . . . please, now. . . .

SIMON

Well, sallemanders, am I a child!

[*He goes off mumbling to himself.*

MARIETJE

Fight against that, now! . . . and it begins early in the morning.

JO

Is he so bad again?

MARIETJE

You ought to have seen him yesterday . . . half the village was after him! Ach, ach! When mother was alive, he didn't dare. She slapped him in the face when he smelt of gin . . . suppose I tried that!

JO (*bursting into a laugh*)

You say that as if . . . hahaha! . . . Mees ought to hear you.

MARIETJE

I've never seen Mees drink . . . and father never used to, you know. Well, I can't put a cork in his mouth . . . I can't lead him around with a string. (*looking through the window.*) There he goes, of course . . . straight to the Red-head. Disgusting old drunkard! How old is Kniertje today?

JO

Sixty-one. Spry for her age, isn't she? Sit down, and tell me now (*gaily*) when are you going to be married?

[*They sit on the window bench.*

MARIETJE

That depends on the trip. You see, we want it right away, (*smiling hesitatingly*) because . . . because . . . now you understand. . . . But first Mees had to send for his papers and that takes two weeks . . . and by that time he'll be far away on the sea. But five weeks . . . five little weeks, they will go by quick enough.

JO (*smiling to herself*)

We'll be married in December.

MARIETJE

That will be about the same time. Are you . . . Are you too? . . . Come now, I've told you everything.

[JO *shrugs her shoulders and laughs.*

KNIERTJE (*entering*)

She laughs all the time. 'Day, Marietje.

MARIETJE (*kissing her*)

A hundred years more!

KNIERTJE (*unpacking her basket*)

God will protect me from that! A hundred years? I haven't got the money to keep me that long. (*opening a twist of paper.*) Here, you can try one of these . . . you too. Ginger snaps. No, not two . . . you with the long grab-fingers. For each of the boys a half pound of ginger snaps and a half package of chewing tobacco, and a bag of cigars. Do you know what Barend is going to get now that he is acting like a man? Look here.

[*Takes ear-rings from her pocket.*

JO

Now, you ought to give those to Geert.

KNIERTJE

No . . . I think it's so fine of the boy that he's cut through the knot at last, I want to give him some pleasure. For something, something should be given.

MARIETJE

Did you buy them?

KNIERTJE

Buy them? Do I buy things? Those are *old* earrings. . . . I don't know how old. My husband used to wear them on Sundays when he was at home.

MARIETJE

There are little ships on them—and masts . . . and little sails . . . I wish I had them for a brooch.

JO

Why does that good-for-nothing get them? I should think that Geert, as the oldest . . .

KNIERTJE

Don't call him good-for-nothing any more. That's not right.

MARIETJE

There was a lot of coming and going before you got him to sign.

KNIERTJE

Yes, yes. But with his brother going along he is willing. And think how you would feel yourself . . . a

boy that isn't strong . . . never has been strong . . . rejected for military service . . . and a boy that is always thinking about his father and brothers. . . .

JO

Now I can't stand that! First you bawl him out and curse him out and now butter wouldn't melt in your mouth.

KNIERTJE

Never mind, now! No matter now what he's been . . . in an hour he'll be gone . . . in an hour. And you must never take leave of anyone in anger. Have a sweet drink, Marietje? We have fresh cookies and ginger nuts. All laid in for my birthday . . . though if I had known that they were sailing today . . . Set everything out, Jo. Saart will be here directly . . . and the boys can have a drink too.

COBUS (*coming in with* DAANTJE)

A glass of gin . . . glad we dropped in . . . why don't we begin? . . .

KNIERTJE

Cobus, throw your quid away outside.

COBUS

I should thank you. . . . (*wraps it in his red handkerchief—he and* DAANTJE *sit at the table—to* JO) Now . . . now . . . you know what I want to say. . . .

DAANTJE

And me the same . . . me the same.

JO
I don't need to ask you. . . .
[*She fills the glass in front of* COBUS.

COBUS
No, no . . . just go right ahead. Pour a little drop more.

JO
There now . . . it's running over.

COBUS
That's nothing. I won't waste a drop. (*leans shakily over the table and drinks without lifting the glass.*) Héhéhéhé!

DAANTJE
Ginger nuts? If you please.
[*Yawns and stretches.*

MARIETJE (*yawning also, imitating him*)
Oh! What do you think of that!

DAANTJE
Peh! If you had my years . . . last night I hardly slept at all and this afternoon no nap . . .

JO
Crawl into bed there . . . hahaha!

COBUS
That he'd like to do with a young girl beside him to keep his feet warm.

MARIETJE
Take a hot water bottle instead, Daan.

COBUS

Now if I had my choice . . .

[*Pinches* MARIETJE's *arm.*

KNIERTJE

Hold your tongue. You talk too much. The matron at the Home has to help him button his breeches and he wants . . .

JO

Hahaha! Oh, Uncle Cobus!

MARIETJE

Hahaha!

COBUS

Tja! They say in English, "A young man kisses the misses, and an old man misses the kisses." Do you understand that?

JO

Exactly. That means, "Woman, bring your cat into the house, it's going to rain." Hahaha! Hahaha!

SAART (*appearing at door*)

Good day. Congratulations to everybody.

COBUS

Come on in!

SAART

'Day, Daantje, and 'day Cobus, and 'day, Marietje, and 'day, Jo. No, I won't sit down.

KNIERTJE

A drink?

SAART

No, I can't sit down. My pot is on the fire.

JO

Please, now.

SAART

No, I can't do it . . . my door is unlatched and the cat might knock over the oil stove. Just give it to me here . . . now . . . now! Many years yet, and may your boys . . . ach now—where are your boys?

KNIERTJE

Geert has gone to say goodby in the village and Barend has gone in the yawl with Mees to carry their mattresses and kit bags and oil-skins on board. They'll be back here soon. They have to be on board at three o'clock.

SAART (*emptying her glass*)

Hé, that burns your heart out! Say, were you at Leen's house yesterday?

KNIERTJE

No, I couldn't go.

SAART

They had everything there and lots of it! The bride took more than she could carry . . . three glasses of "Roses Without-Thorns," two of "Perfect Love," and at least four of "Maid-in-the-bower!" How she stowed it away!

COBUS

How her sweet little lips must have smacked! Héhé!

. . . Just give me an old-fashioned dram of brandy with syrup . . . eh, Daan?

DAANTJE (*waking with a start*)
What?

KNIERTJE
He comes here to sleep. He acts as if he hadn't been to bed at all.

COBUS
To bed! Héhéhé!

DAANTJE (*angrily*)
Now! Don't get so funny!

JO (*giggling*)
Uncle Cobus!
[*Points to her nose.*

COBUS (*taking out his handkerchief*)
Ho, ho! Change in the weather!

KNIERTJE
Look out now! Don't drop your quid.

SAART
Old butt-snooper!

COBUS
Butt-snooper! You'll never guess how I got this quid. Not ten minutes ago I saw Bos . . . and he gave me . . . he gave me a little white roll . . . tissue paper with tobacco in it . . . what do you call those things?

MARIETJE
Cigarettes.

COBUS
Yes. Me smoke a thing like that . . . with nasty paper around it. That's a quid with a little shirt on.

SAART
And you're a gin-guzzler without any shirt on! No I can't sit down.

JO
I've filled the glasses up again.

SIMON (*in the doorway, half drunk*)
'Day, everybody.

KNIERTJE
'Day, Simon. Just crowd in . . . always room for one more.

COBUS
A sweet drink?

MARIETJE (*anxiously*)
No.

SIMON (*obstinately*)
Why "no"?

MARIETJE
You've had enough.

SIMON
I've had nothing . . . sallemanders!

MARIETJE
Now the pleasure's all over.

KNIERTJE
Didn't you see Geert?

SIMON (*muttering stupidly*)
Uh, uh . . . Geert . . .

COBUS
Give him another . . . just for good measure.

MARIETJE (*angrily*)
No! No!

SIMON (*stupidly*)
No? Well, I'll be damned!
[*Sits down, lights his cutty.*

KNIERTJE
Is there much work at the docks, Simon?

SIMON
Yes, now . . . yes, now—listen—
[*Mumbles dully.*

SAART
Well, I'll be off . . .

JO
Come now . . . that's neighborly! The boys will be here right away. Take a chair. . . .

SAART
No . . . when I sit down I talk the time away . . . well, just half a glass then . . . no, no cookies.

GEERT (*at the side door*)
It looks like all hands on deck here! Good day, all. Eh, Simon!

SIMON (*mumbling*)
Uh . . . yes . . .

MARIETJE
Let him alone.

GEERT
The devil! Putting on airs with me! Only fifteen minutes more, people. Fill up the glasses, Jo. (*between* KNIERTJE *and* JO.) Here you are, mother! Proost! Santjes! Santjes, Jo . . . Santjes, Daantje!

*Jo* (*pointing to* DAAN)
Hahaha! Asleep with a ginger nut in his hand!

KNIERTJE
Doesn't he feel well?

COBUS (*mischievously*)
Sst! Sst! Last night . . . héhéhé . . . last night he wanted to get a drink of water . . . upset the pitcher all over his bed. (*giggling.*) And then he was afraid of the matron . . . afraid she would think— (*giggling.*) So he got up . . . in his bare feet . . . and dried the sheets by the stove . . . héhéhé but the mattress was wet . . . dripping wet . . . and before it was dry . . . Sst! Sst! Don't let him know you heard it from me!

JO
Hahaha!

MARIETJE

Hahaha! Poor old Daan!

SAART

Nice to tell tales on your friend!

COBUS

Tell tales? I didn't tell the matron.

GEERT

And suppose you did tell her? Are you afraid of the matron? Are you eating charity bread? You've paid your money.

COBUS

Easy for you to talk! If they catch you in anything you can't go out for two weeks.

GEERT

Poor fellow! I hope I'll never live to be that old.

JO

Oh, isn't that nice! Not married yet and a widow already!

GEERT (*gaily*)

How do you know you're *ever* going to get me? Hahaha! (*pointing to* DAAN.) Shall I give him a poke? I don't need a belaying pin for that.

[*He sings, beating time on the table with his fist . . . the others join in.*

Sailing, sailing . . . don't let the bosun call you
Starboard watch, jump out of your bunks!
You can go swimming on the deck,

The rain falls fast and the wind has gone down
And it's sailing, sailing.
Sailing on the starboard watch! Hahaha!

DAANTJE (*waking with a start*)

Now that could happen to any of you at my age!

GEERT

Hahaha! I'll never be old. Leaky ships must go to the bottom!

JO

Now, Geert!

SAART

He won't get old! If you had said that a while ago when you still looked like a flabby dish rag! . . . But now! . . . It did you good to sit in prison, young fellow!

COBUS

We can make a song about you pasting paper bags in prison . . . just like Domela the Socialist! Héhéhé!

[*Sings in a piping voice.*

My nevvy Geert pastes paper bags
Hi . . . ha . . . ho . . .
My nevvy Geert. . . .

SAART

—Pastes paper bags.

THE OTHERS

Hi . . . ha . . . ho!—etc.

(Note: Domela was a famous socialist about whom many songs were made)

GEERT

What rowdies! (*Laughing.*) They're making a joke of it!

KNIERTJE (*anxiously*)

Please now, you mustn't act so wild . . . that brings bad luck.

JO

Ach! I expected that! It's your birthday, isn't it? Take a chair, now, Saart.

SAART

A chair? . . . where'll I get one?

MARIETJE

I can stand up.

SAART

No . . . I've got a seat.

[*Plants herself on half of* COBUS's *chair.*

COBUS

You're pushing me off! You go sit on your thumb.

MARIETJE (*to* SIMON *who is huddled in a drunken stupor*)

Father!

SIMON (*muttering thickly*)

They must— . . . they must . . . not . . . not . . . I told them . . . that's the truth—

MARIETJE

Come now!

GEERT
Let him scud under his own sails. The man isn't bothering anybody.

SIMON (*gesturing aimlessly*)
You must . . . you must! . . .

MARIETJE (*irritably*)
What do you mean? Must what? . . .

SIMON (*mumbling*)
The ribs . . . the timbers. . . . (*heavily.*) It's the truth. . . .

GEERT, JO, COBUS, DAANTJE, SAART
Hahaha! Hahahaha!

MEES (*from the side door*)
Sallusies!

KNIERTJE (*anxiously*)
Are you alone? And . . . and . . . Barend?

MEES (*good naturedly*)
Don't ask me.

KNIERTJE
But you went together with the bags and the mattresses. . . .

MEES
A row with the skipper! What kind of a seaman is that!

JO
A row! Making trouble already?

MEES
I'm not going to talk about it . . . Afraid—afraid . . . always afraid! (*to Marietje.*) Are you coming with me?

JO
No . . . first a drink . . . it's tante's birthday.

MEES
Well, think of that now! Well, well! Many more years, Kniertje!

KNIERTJE
You've made me uneasy.

JO (*laughing*)
Uneasy?

KNIERTJE (*angrily*)
Yes, uneasy. She's surprised at that? I've taken an advance from Bos.

GEERT
Don't be silly, mother . . . he's signed hard and fast. . . .

COBUS
He's just gone to tell his girl goodby.
[JELLE's *violin is heard outside.*
Ta-de-da-de-da-da!
[*He jiggles about on his chair.*

SAART
Sit still, will you? You act as if you had fleas!

JELLE (*playing a polka at the window*)
If you please!

COBUS

Come on in, old man.

[JELLE *stumbles into the room.*

JO

Ach, jezis, the poor old man sees less every day!

JELLE (*as he plays*)

I come regularly once a week.

GEERT

That damned polka! Try another tune, old man.

JO

Play the . . . the . . . now what's the name of that? . . .

COBUS

Yes, that's a pretty tune . . . the one she says!

SAART

You know, Jelle . . . the . . . (*sings*) "I know a song that charms the heart!"

MEES

Say, just give us . . .

[JELLE *begins "La Marseillaise".*

That's the ticket!

[*Sings.*

"Allose-vodela-debieje . . . deboe-debie-deboelebie!"

COBUS

What's that you're singing?

MEES

That's French!

MARIETJE

Hahaha! That's dead-codfish French!

JO

Hahaha!

MEES

Laugh all you like! We lay in a French port once . . . everything fine there! When you said "pan" you got a piece of bread, and when you said "open the port" they opened the door . . . that's the truth.

GEERT

Hahaha! Play it again, Jelle. What the devil! . . . we've got our own words for it!

[JELLE *begins again* . . . GEERT *roars out the words.*

Up men, up brothers, all united!
Up burgers, join your strength to ours!
Your woes, your griefs shall be assuaged . . .

BOS (*shouting angrily through the window from where he has listened to the singing*)

What's all this here? (*everybody is frightened into silence*) Get yourselves on board, damn it . . . it's high time!

[*Goes off raging.*

KNIERTJE (*after a long silence*)

Oh! Oh! How he frightened me! Hé! Hé!

JO

What was the matter with him?

MEES

I couldn't think where the voice came from. . . .

SAART

How could you be so stupid . . . when you know that meneer Bos lives only two doors away . . . bellowing like a stuck pig!

MARIETJE

Jezis! How mad he was!

COBUS (*to* GEERT)

Héhéhé! You won't last very long with him.

KNIERTJE

Why do you sing such low songs?

GEERT

Well, the devil! Am I in my own house, or not! If the old frog hadn't taken me by surprise, sticking his head in at the window all of a sudden, I'd have wiped up the floor with him! "Get yourself on board!" Play up, Jelle!

[JELLE *begins.*

KNIERTJE

Ach, please, no, Geert. . . . I'm afraid that if meneer Bos . . .

[*Motions* JELLE *to stop.*

GEERT

This one is afraid to go to sea! . . . This one is afraid of the matron in the Home! . . . This one is afraid of a little ship-owner! Dictates to me in

my own house! Orders me around as if I was his office boy.

SAART

Joking is joking . . . but if you was a ship owner you wouldn't like it either if one of your sailors sang socialist songs. . . .

KNIERTJE

And when he knows how dependent I am.

GEERT (*passionately*)

Dependent! Don't be dependent! Is it an honor for you to do his cleaning? You ought to pay him for the privilege! . . . Say thank you when you scrub the floor he walks on! . . . Go down on your knees to clean up his dirt! . . . Lick the mud off of his shoes! Dependent! Fifty cents twice a week and the scraps they leave on their plates after they've stuffed themselves!

JO

Don't get in such a temper, silly boy!

KNIERTJE

Oh, oh! What a scolding I am going to get next Saturday! I . . . I . . . May God protect me. . . .

GEERT

May God protect you from bending your neck all your days! Here take this, Jelle! (*sings.*) Up, men! Up, brothers, all united. . . .

KNIERTJE (*puts her hand over his mouth*)

Please now, Geert!

JO

Hé! Why do you plague that old woman on her birthday!

[JELLE *holds out his hand. . . . they give him a few coins*]

COBUS

All my property is tied up in the bank.

JELLE

Many thanks to all.

[*Goes off.*

MEES (*to* MARIETJE)

Now will you come with me?

GEERT

I'll wait a little while yet for Barend. What's your hurry? The boys will come by here anyway.

SAART (*to* GEERT)

Don't you see what those two want? (*to* MEES.) Goodby! . . . good luck!

{MEES
MARIETJE

Goodby!

[*There is much shaking of hands, good wishes . . . they go off.*

KNIERTJE

Half past two . . . I'm getting worried.

SAART

Half past two? Have I stayed that long? And my

door on the latch! Lucky voyage, Geert! Goodby, Kniertje, old woman . . . goodby all!

[*Goes out.*

BOS (*coming in brusquely*)

Well, are you planning to go back on me too?

GEERT (*roughly*)

Do you mean that for me?

BOS (*angrily*)

For you? Yes. Skipper Hengst has my orders, you understand.

GEERT (*nonchalant*)

Out of his head—

BOS (*furiously*)

The water-bailiff has been notified. . . .

GEERT (*trying to control himself*)

To hell with you and the water-bailiff!

[COBUS *and* DAANTJE *slip out, but stand listening at the window.*

Are you crazy! Who told you I wasn't coming on board?

KNIERTJE

He's all ready, meneer.

BOS

That other boy of yours, that Hengst took on as head boy . . . he's given us the slip.

KNIERTJE

Oh, good God!

BOS (*to* COBUS *and* DAANTJE)

Is this any of your business? (*they disappear.*) This house is getting disreputable . . . guzzling and brawling!

JO

It's tante's birthday.

GEERT

And if it wasn't mother's birthday, we'd do as we please anyway.

BOS

Be good enough to change your tone!

GEERT

My tone! . . . Get out of here!

KNIERTJE (*agitated*)

Ach, Geert dear! Don't take it ill of him, meneer . . . He's angry and when you're angry you say things—

BOS

Unwarrantable things! You treat your employees decently and then . . . then you get dirt for your thanks! (*threateningly.*) If you are not on board in ten minutes, I'll have the coast guard drag you there!

GEERT

Drag me there! Who do you think you're talking to!

JO

Please, Geert . . . be still . . .

BOS

"Who do you think I'm talking to?" he says . . . he dares to say that! (*to* KNIERTJE.) Ask me again to

say a good word for a rowdy that's been kicked out of the Marines?

GEERT (*mockingly*)
Did you say a good word for me? Hahaha! You make me sick! You pay my wages . . . I do my work! And for the rest, the back of my hand to you!

BOS
You are an impudent, overgrown lout!

GEERT (*grimly*)
If I didn't hold back for mother's sake, I'd—

JO (*throwing her arms around his neck*)
Geert! Geert!
[*A silence.*

BOS
And this in your house, Knier! (*at the door.*) Understand what you are doing. I gave you the advance in good faith. Good-day.

KNIERTJE
Ach meneer, ach, yes.

BOS
Have I ever treated you badly?

KNIERTJE
No, meneer . . . you and the pastor . . .

BOS
One of your sons won't work for me . . . the other . . . you'll come to a bad end, my young friend!

GEERT

Haul in your sails! On board I'm a sailor . . . here I'm the skipper. How ridiculous! A ship owner that won't have this and won't have that and pokes his nose in at the window when you sing something that don't suit him. . . .

BOS

Go ahead and sing as far as I'm concerned. . . . But would your father, who was a good man through and through, have dared to threaten his patron? You young people have no respect for gray hairs.

GEERT

Good enough! Respect for gray hairs! Yes! But only for gray hairs that have grown gray in poverty and hard work! . . . .

BOS (*shrugging his shoulders*)

Your mother has seen me as a child standing at the bait bucket . . . I've baited hooks in an east wind that was sharp enough to cut your ears off. . . .

GEERT

Don't tell any more of those tales, meneer. You have worked yourself up very cleverly . . . you have become a man of money . . . and a petty tyrant. All right! You are no worse than the others . . . but in my own house you leave me alone! My father was a different sort from me . . . we are all going to be different . . . and perhaps if my sons live long enough . . . when they go, like I did twelve years ago, to ask if there is any news of their father and their brothers, they won't find the patron sitting

snugly in his office, with a glass of grog by a warm stove and a well filled money chest . . . and they won't be cursed because they come back so often with the same question . . . and they won't have the door slammed in their faces with the snarling words, "When there is any news you will be told!"

BOS (*roughly*)

You lie! That I have never done!

GEERT

I won't waste words over that! . . . I only want you to know that I remember it. Gray hairs! My mother's hair is gray . . . my father's hair was gray . . . Jelle has gray hair too and *how* gray!

BOS

Big talk! Arguing without head or tail! And now I'll give you one bit of advice, my young friend, before you sail. . . . You have an old mother . . . you want to get married . . . you've been six months in prison . . . we won't talk about that . . . you have barked at me like an insolent dog in your own house . . . but if you try any funny business on board the Good Hope you will find out what ship discipline is. . . .

GEERT

A year old child knows that.

BOS

When you have grown a little older and wiser, you will be ashamed of your impudence . . . the ship owner with his grog and his warm stove! . . .

GEERT (*mockingly*)
And his money chest.

BOS (*angrily*)
And his worries and troubles, that you haven't any idea of. Who feeds you all?

GEERT
Who hauls the fish out of the sea? Who risks his life every hour in the day? Who goes around in water-soaked clothes for six weeks at a stretch, sleeping like beasts, two and two in a stall, with hands raw with salt water sores. Twelve of us are sailing on your ship in an hour. We get twenty-five percent of the profits . . . you get seventy-five. We do the work . . . you sit comfortably at home. Your ship is insured, but we . . . we can go to hell if the ship sinks . . . we're not worth insuring!
[*Through the window one sees a crowd of fishermen going by . . . a Voice calls, "Are you coming with us, Geert?" . . .* BOS *is greeted respectfully.*

GEERT
I'll follow you right away, boys.

BOS
A lucky voyage, fellows! Will you tell the skipper—no, you needn't tell him . . . I'll come myself. (*a silence.*) I'll just take two minutes to tell you what I've tried to say three times. When you lie tonight in your stall . . . like a beast naturally . . . try to think a little of my risks . . . when the catch is bad . . . when the nets are lost or damaged . . . when the ship runs aground, and God knows what

else! The hatches were swept away from the Jacoba not long ago, the Queen Wilhelmina had half her bulwarks torn away by a big wave! You don't take that into account . . . you don't have to pay for it. Three months ago the Expectation collided with a steamboat . . . without thinking of the ship, the fish or the nets, the crew took to the boats, leaving the ship adrift. Who thought of *my* interests? You can laugh, youngster, because you don't know the worries I have. Last week the crew of the Matilda smuggled gin and tobacco in their mattresses to sell to the English. Now the ship is held by the government. Do you pay the fine?

GEERT

Pluck feathers off a frog? Hahaha!

BOS

You don't have to worry about harbor charges, bait, towing rates, provisions, barrels or salt. I don't make you pay for wear and tear. I fork over myself if a gaff or a boom is broken. I gave your mother an advance and your brother Barend has deserted. . . .

KNIERTJE (*anxiously*)

No, meneer, I can't believe that.

BOS

Hengst telephoned me from the harbor just now. I stopped to tell you . . . otherwise I would not have come back to be insulted by this son of yours! (*to* KNIERTJE) And you . . . in the future my wife will not need you. This house has become a brothel!

KNIERTJE
Meneer, it isn't my fault.

GEERT
Must you take it out on the old woman?

BOS
That's what you get when your own son fouls the nest. After this trip you can look for another employer.

GEERT (*beside himself*)
And now, get out! Get out!
[*He slams the door behind* BOS.

KNIERTJE
What a birthday! What a birthday!

JO
Don't hang your head like that, tante! Geert was in the right.

KNIERTJE
In the right? What if he is in the right!
[*Gets up.*

GEERT (*angrily*)
Are you going to run after him?

KNIERTJE
No, I'm going to look for Barend . . . Great God . . . If he has deserted . . . if he has deserted he'll be sent to prison too . . . both sons in . . .

GEERT
Won't you wish me a lucky trip first . . . or don't you think that's worth while?

KNIERTJE

My head is in a whirl. I'll come down to the harbor. . . . I'll come there. . . .

[*Goes out.*

JO

I feel so sorry for her . . . the poor thing.

GEERT

He's a dirty dog! . . .

JO

Where is your sou'wester? If we have to look for that now! . . . You gave it to him good! It was that drunken Simon that made him so mad. Now don't look so glum. Here's your sou'wester. (*she picks a geranium from a flower pot . . . puts it in his button hole.*) There! And you keep it like that! (*on his knee.*) And think of me every night, will you? (*jumping up.*) Are you back so soon, tante!

KNIERTJE

Isn't Barend here?

GEERT

He's in my pocket. Hahaha!

KNIERTJE

Truus saw him sneaking behind the house. Ach! Ach!

GEERT

We're going now. Will you come along with us? If that little sneak backs out it won't do a damn bit of good for you to sit here.

KNIERTJE
No, no, no!

JO
Will you come later then?

KNIERTJE
Yes, yes. Don't forget your package of tobacco and your cigars.

GEERT (*gaily*)
If you come too late, you'll never set eyes on me again.
[*They go out.*

BAREND (*coming in and shutting the door quickly behind him*)
Sst!

KNIERTJE
You miserable brat!

BAREND (*shrinkingly*)
Sst.

KNIERTJE
Why "Sst!" I'll scream till the whole village comes running if you don't follow right away after Geert and Jo.

BAREND (*panting with agitation*)
If you can call Geert back . . . don't let him go! . . . don't let him go!

KNIERTJE
Have you gone crazy with fear, you coward!

BAREND (*shuddering*)
The Good Hope is no good . . . no good! The hull is rotten . . . the deck beams are rotten!

KNIERTJE
Don't stand there talking nonsense to excuse yourself. Get down to the ship!

BAREND (*wildly*)
If you don't believe me . . .

KNIERTJE
I won't even listen to you . . . get out or I'll slap you in the face!

BAREND
Beat me then . . . beat me! Oh God! Make Geert come back! Mother! Simon knows . . . he worked on the repairs . . . he warned me!

KNIERTJE
Simon! That drunken sot, that can't put two words together! You sickening brat! First sign on . . . then run away! Stand up!

BAREND
No, not if you beat me to death! I won't go on a ship that isn't seaworthy!

KNIERTJE
What do you know about it? Isn't the ship just off dry docks!

BAREND
The seams couldn't be caulked any more! Simon said . . .

KNIERTJE

Hold your tongue with your Simon! Get out! Here . . . take your tobacco. . . .

BAREND (*screaming*)

I won't go! I won't go! You don't know . . . you haven't seen . . . there was a foot of water in the hold the last trip!

KNIERTJE

The last trip? The last trip the Good Hope brought back fourteen tons of herring! Is she all at once unseaworthy just because *you* have to go on her!

BAREND

I looked in the hold . . . the barrels were floating—in water . . . you can see death hiding down there below!

KNIERTJE

There is bilge water in every ship. The barrels are floating? Don't talk to an old seaman's wife! Is Skipper Hengst a fool? Isn't Hengst going and Mees and Jacob and Gerrit and Nelis? . . . and your own brother, and little Pietje? Do you think you know better than old seamen? (*violently.*) Get up! I can't stand it to see you dragged on board by the coast guard.

BAREND (*imploringly*)

Oh, mother dear, mother dear! . . . don't make me go!

KNIERTJE

Oh God . . . how you have punished me in my chil-

dren! Meneer Bos gave me an advance . . . the guard has been notified . . . I can't clean for meneer any more! (*firmly.*) Well, they'll have to drag you then. Oh, oh, that such a thing should happen in my family!

[*She tries to push him out of the door.*

BAREND

Let go of me, mother. . . . I don't know what I'm doing. . . . I might . . .

KNIERTJE

Now he's brave enough! Raise your hand against me if you dare! . . . your old mother!

BAREND (*shaking his head crazily between his hands*)

Oh, oh, oh! If they drag me on board . . . you'll never see me again . . . you'll never see Geert again!

KNIERTJE

The ship is in God's hands. (*more kindly.*) Come now, a boy of your age mustn't snivel like a child. I thought I would do you a pleasure by giving you your father's ear-rings. Come. . . .

BAREND

Mother, dear . . . I don't dare . . . I don't dare! I'll be drowned! Hide me . . . hide me! . . .

KNIERTJE

Are you completely crazy, boy! If I believed one word of your nonsense I wouldn't let Geert go, would I? Sit still now, and I'll put the ear-rings in. Look! (*talking as if to a child.*) Solid silver . . . little

ships on them and sails! Sit still! There's one! There's two. Go look in the glass.

BAREND

No, no!

KNIERTJE

Please now. You are making me sick . . . just for nothing. Please now, dear boy . . . I love you and your brother. . . . You two are all I have in the world. Every night I will pray to the good God to bring you home safe and sound. Come now, Barend. . . . (*holds the mirror before him, wiping away her tears.*) Look at your ear-rings now. . . . See!

FIRST COAST-GUARD (*stepping in at the door*)

Skipper Hengst asked the water-bailiff . . . if you please, little fellow . . . we have no time to lose.

BAREND (*shrieking*)

I won't go! I won't go with you! The ship is rotten!

SECOND COAST-GUARD (*smiling good naturedly*)

Then you ought not to have signed on, Barendje. Must we use force? Come now, little man. . . .
[*Slaps him pleasantly on the shoulder.*

BAREND (*clinging desperately to the door post*)

Don't touch me! Don't touch me!

THIRD COAST-GUARD

Must we put the handcuffs on, boy?

BAREND (*his teeth chattering with terror*)

Help me, mother! You'll never see me again! I'll drown! I'll drown in that dirty, rotten sea. . . .

FIRST COAST-GUARD (*roughly*)
Come, come! Let go of the door!
[*Takes hold of his wrist.*

BAREND (*holding on tighter*)
No! No! Cut my hands off! Oh God! Oh God!
[*Crouches against the wall, wild with fear.*

KNIERTJE (*almost shrieking too*)
The boy is afraid!

FIRST COAST-GUARD
Make him let go.

KNIERTJE (*sobbing*)
Please now, boy, please now! God will take care of you. . . .
[*She loosens* BAREND'S *hands.*

BAREND (*letting go of the door, moaning in despair*)
You'll never see me again . . . never again!

FIRST COAST-GUARD
Out with you!

KNIERTJE
Oh, oh!
[*A silence.*

TRUUS (*looking through the window anxiously*)
What was that, Knier? . . .

KNIERTJE (*sobbing*)
Those brutes have taken Barend away . . . and now I don't dare go through the village to say goodby to Geert! Oh, the disgrace . . . the disgrace!

*Curtain.*

## ACT THREE

*Six weeks later.*

*The same stage setting as before. Evening. A lamp burns. A glowing fire on the hearth throws a brilliant light over the whole scene. A fierce wind is howling and and shrieking around the house.*

JO (*reading in front of the bed where* KNIERTJE *is lying*)
This verse is beautiful . . . are you listening?

Prayer to Mary for the Dead

Mother Mary, look in pity
On your children here below.
Fold your loving arms around them
Soothe them in their bitter woe.
At the throne of God on high
Beg for them his clemency.

[*Peeping into the bed.*
Are you asleep, tante? Are you asleep?

[*There is a knock . . . she tiptoes to the door, puts her fingers on her lips as* CLEMENTINE *and* KAPS *enter.*
Softly, juffrouw!

CLEMENTINE
Shut the door quickly! What weather! What dog's weather! My eyes are full of sand. Is Kniertje sick?

JO

She just lay down a minute in her clothes . . . she don't feel just right . . . a cough and fever.

CLEMENTINE

I brought her a bowl of broth and six eggs. . . . Now then, Kaps! *Kaps!*

KAPS

Well?

CLEMENTINE

Put them on the table! What a nuisance he is . . . as deaf as a post. (*in a loud voice.*) Where did you put the eggs!

KAPS

I can hear you all right.

KNIERTJE (*from the bed*)

Is there someone here?

CLEMENTINE

It's Clementine.

KNIERTJE (*getting up*)

Has the wind gone down yet?

CLEMENTINE

I've brought you a bowl of veal broth. . . . (*to* KAPS.) Well, how's this? You have spilled half of it!

KAPS

It's not so easy to hold a bowl steady with the wind blowing your eyes full of sand. . . .

CLEMENTINE

Where are the eggs? (KAPS *begins to take them out of his pocket.*) One, two, three, four. . . . Where are the other two?

KAPS (*feeling in his other pocket and taking out his hand dripping with egg yolk*)

What a mess! That happened when you stumbled against me. Just look at my keys . . . and my pocket book . . . and my handkerchief!

JO (*laughing*)

Make an omelet of them! Ha-ha-ha!

CLEMENTINE (*to* KAPS)

You may as well go home, Kaps!

KAPS

What?

CLEMENTINE

Go along home. I'll come back alone.

KAPS (*ill-naturedly*)

Goodnight then! My God—my cork-screw! (*goes off.*)

CLEMENTINE

I can't understand why my father keeps such a book-keeper . . . deaf . . . ill-natured . . . . (*to* KNIERTJE.) Does it taste good?

KNIERTJE

That it does, juffrouw! You must thank your mother for me.

CLEMENTINE

Indeed I will not! Father and mother are still angry. They haven't forgotten the trouble with your sons yet. May Jo come with me a minute to look at the sea! I've never seen it so high before.

JO

I'd like to go, juffrouw.

KNIERTJE

No, don't leave me alone. . . . Is this weather to go to the beach! (*a crashing noise outside.*) Hé!

JO

What was that?

CLEMENTINE

I heard something break.

COBUS (*opens the door letting in a blast of wind*)

God protect me! That missed me by a hair.

JO

Are you hurt?

COBUS

I got a whack on my after works . . . a good strong one . . . suppose my head had been there! The tree by the pig-pen is broken in two like a pipe-stem.

KNIERTJE

Did it come down on the shed?

COBUS

I think it did.

KNIERTJE

If only the whole thing hasn't caved in! . . . the wood is so old. . . .

JO

Ach, now, no! Tante always expects the worse. (*in surprise.*) Uncle Cobus, what are you doing out in this awful weather and after eight o'clock.

COBUS

Getting a doctor for Daan.

CLEMENTINE

Is old Daan sick?

COBUS

Tja! Took to his bed all of a sudden . . . old age! . . . old age! . . . can't keep anything on his stomach. . . . The beans and bacon grease he had for dinner he . . . with your permission . . . threw up right away.

CLEMENTINE

Do they give a sick old man like that beans and bacon grease?

COBUS

Tja! Should the matron roast a chicken or broil a beef steak for him? She was furious that she had to beat up an egg for him this morning. This afternoon he was out of his head . . . talking about setting nets . . . lighting the beacon . . . about squalls from the North! "He's going fast," I says to the

matron. "Just look out that it don't get you," says she. "Matron, the doctor must come," says I. "Attend to your own affairs," says she, "are you the matron or am I the matron?" "You're the matron," says I. "Well, then," says she, but right afterwards she said, "You'd better get the doctor." As if she couldn't have known that just as well at noon! I went for the doctor and the doctor is away. So I came to get Simon to drive me to the city in his dog cart.

CLEMENTINE

If drunken Simon is going to drive you, you have a good chance of rolling off the dyke.

COBUS

He isn't drunk tonight. Hé, what a wind! Listen! Listen now! The tiles will be flying off the roof soon. [*A wild blast of wind drowns his voice.*

CLEMENTINE

You say Daan is delirious?

COBUS

Yes . . . and a good thing for him, afraid as he was of dying.

CLEMENTINE

Everybody is afraid of dying, Cobus.

COBUS (*with deep conviction*)

Everybody! No, it's just the way you take it. If tomorrow it's my turn . . . then I'll say, "We all have to go. God gives . . . God takes." Now this is some-

thing you ought to think about . . . and don't laugh! We take the fish and God takes us. On the fifth day He created the sea and the creatures therein, and He said, "Be fruitful!", and He blessed them. That was evening and that was morning and that was the fifth day. And on the sixth day He created man, and said to him too, "Be fruitful!" and blessed him too. And that was again evening and again morning . . . and that was the sixth day. No, you mustn't laugh . . . there's no sense in laughing . . . you must reason it out. When I was at the fishing grounds or in the salting sheds sometimes I could hardly make up my mind to use the gutting knife . . . because when you push back a herring's head with your thumb, and the knife lifts out the insides, then that poor beast looks at you with such human eyes! . . . and you have to clean two quintals like that in an hour! And when you cut out the livers . . . a barrel of livers out of fourteen hundred codfish . . . that makes twenty-eight hundred eyes that look at you . . . just look at you . . . only look at you! Don't ask me how many fish I have killed. . . . There weren't many that could lift out the bones and the fat livers like I did. Tja. Tja! And how afraid they all were! . . . afraid! They looked up at the clouds as if they were trying to say, "He blessed us just like he did you . . . how can this be?" I say . . . we take the fish and God takes us. We all have to go . . . men have to go . . . beasts have to go. And because we all have to go, it's just the same as if none of us had to go. It's as if you emptied a full barrel into an empty barrel. I would

be afraid to stay alone in the empty barrel, but with all the rest in the full barrel, it's all right! It's foolish to be afraid . . . being afraid is like standing on your toes to look over the edge.

KNIERTJE

Is that any way to talk when it's night and the wind is howling so outside! You act as if you'd had a drop too much.

COBUS

A drink? Not even a bowl of coffee, woman! Where can Simon be?

KNIERTJE (*listening*)

Was I right about the pigsty or not? Listen how that poor animal is going on! (*goes toward the door.*) I'll bet you what you like that the wall has fallen in.

JO

Let me go . . . don't you go outside.

KNIERTJE

Ach, leave me alone.

[*Goes out through the cooking shed.*

JO

Stubborn, isn't she? I'll go help her. Pour yourself a bowl of coffee while we're gone.

CLEMENTINE

Oh, oh, what weather! What a gale! (*coming back to the table.*) I shall thank God when the Good Hope is safe in port.

COBUS

Tja! there is not one ship safe on the sea tonight . . . but the Good Hope is an old ship and old ships are the last to go down. . . .

CLEMENTINE

You say that. . . .

COBUS

No, everybody that has sailed says that . . . will you have a bowl, too, juffrouw?

CLEMENTINE

No . . . no thank you. (*a silence.*) I shall pray God tonight to bring the Good Hope in safely.

COBUS

That is very kind of you, juffrouw . . . but the Jacoba is out, and the Matilda is out, and the Expectation is out . . . why should you pray for one ship?

CLEMENTINE

The Good Hope is so rotten! . . . They say . . . they say . . .

[*She hesitates.*

COBUS (*gulping his coffee*)

Who says that?

CLEMENTINE

Someone said . . . and I thought . . . that . . . it just came into my mind. . . .

COBUS

Now you sit there talking nonsense—

CLEMENTINE

Oh, you are very polite!

COBUS

If the Good Hope was rotten, your father wouldn't—

CLEMENTINE (*as* KNIERTJE *opens the door*)

Shut your big mouth . . . you'll make Kniertje uneasy!

KNIERTJE

A good thing that we went to look. . . .

JO

The whole thing was blown down.

KNIERTJE

Oh my poor boys! How frightened Barend will be . . . and just on the homeward journey!

JO

Coffee, mother? . . . tante, I mean! . . . Isn't that crazy? I make that mistake all the time! Won't you have a bowl, juffrouw? The evening is so long and so dreary . . . yes?

SIMON

Good evening!

[*Blast of wind blows in as he opens the door.*

KNIERTJE

Shut the door quick—for the lamp!

SIMON

Sallemanders! What a wind! (*to* MARIETJE *who follows him, sobbing.*) Shut up with your bawling!

KNIERTJE

Is anything the matter?

MARIETJE

When I think of Mees . . . in this storm . . .

KNIERTJE

Now, now! Look at Jo! Her sweetheart is out too. Be a good sailor's wife now! Stupid girl! Silly girl! Give her a bowl of coffee to put heart into her.

MARIETJE

It's going on for the sixth week. . . .

COBUS

Don't cry before you're hurt. *You* haven't had anything to stand yet. Is the equipage at the door?

SIMON

I'm damned if I feel like going! If it wasn't for Daan . . .

JO

This will make you feel better, Simon.

SIMON (*gulping a mouthful*)

Sallemanders, that's hot! (*drinks slowly.*) It happened to me like this once before with the dog-cart . . . in just such a storm. That was for Katrien . . . she lay at the point of death. Twice the cart and I were turned upside down together . . . and when I got back with the doctor . . . Katrien was dead and the child was dead! Still, if you ask me, I'd rather be in my cart tonight than on the sea!

KNIERTJE
Yes! Yes!

JO
More coffee?

SIMON
No. Let's not waste our time. Ready, Cobus.

COBUS
If you'll drive careful, now! Goodnight, all!

JO
Don't sit there so dumb! Let's talk about something pleasant, and then we won't think about anything. . . .

MARIETJE (*after a pause*)
Last night the wind was just as bad . . . and I had such a horrible dream . . . such an awful dream!

CLEMENTINE
Dreams always go by contraries, silly girl!

MARIETJE
I don't really know if it was a dream or not . . . there was a knock on my shutter . . . once . . . I lay still . . . then again . . . I got up, but there was nothing there, nothing . . . but when I laid down again, there was again a knock . . . like that! (*she knocks on the table.*) And then I saw Mees . . . his face was as white as . . . God, oh God! And there was nothing, nothing but the wind!

KNIERTJE (*in deadly fear*)
Knocked three times? . . . three times!

MARIETJE
Like that. . . . (*knocks.*) Exactly like that.

JO
You are a blockhead of a girl! . . . to give the old woman such a turn with your knocks!
[*There is a knock at the door . . . everybody starts . . .* SAART *and* TRUUS *come in.*

SAART
How queer you all look. 'Day, juffrouw.

TRUUS
May we come in a minute?

JO
Hé, thank God that somebody has come!

SAART
It's wild outside! My neck and ears are full of sand! And cold! Throw on a couple of pieces of wood!

TRUUS
I couldn't stand it at home . . . the children are asleep . . . not a soul to talk to . . . and the wind howling around the house! . . . Two mooring posts have been blown away!

KNIERTJE (*taking up a stocking to darn*)
Two mooring posts!

SAART
Now talk about something else, will you?

JO

That's what I say too . . . why should we . . . milk and sugar? Eh?

SAART

Sugar? Have you got sugar? Of course! What a question!

JO

Well, Geert never takes sugar.

CLEMENTINE

Your little son behaved like a real sailor, Truus. I can see him now standing and waving his hand as they sailed away.

TRUUS (*knitting*)

He's a treasure of a boy . . . and not yet twelve years old. . . . You should have seen him, two months ago, when the Anna came back without Arie! How that child acted! Like an angel! Like a grown man! In the evenings he sat up with me . . . and how he talked! That boy knows more than I do. If only the lamb hasn't been terribly seasick! . . .

SAART (*knitting*)

Now, you won't believe me, but if you wear red spectacles you'll never be sea-sick!

JO (*patching a pair of flannel drawers*)

Hahaha! Have you tried it? You are like the doctors . . . you make other people try your medicine!

SAART

I've slept many a night on board when my man

was alive . . . I've made plenty of voyages. . . .

JO

I'd like to have seen you in your oil-skins!

CLEMENTINE

Have *you* been married, Saart?

SAART

Hé now! The young lady is spreading molasses on my mouth! I've got some looks left, girls . . . do you hear? Have I been married? . . . that I have! He was a good fellow . . . a fine fellow! Only when something didn't go to suit him . . . not to speak ill of him . . . he couldn't keep his paws to himself . . . he smashed everything to pieces! I still have a coffee kettle that he broke the handle off of . . . I wouldn't part with that for any money!

CLEMENTINE

Hahaha! I wouldn't like to risk offering you a gulden for it.

JO

Hé, she tells things so funny! Tell us about the Haarlemmer oil, Saart.

SAART

Yes . . . except for Haarlemmer oil, perhaps I wouldn't be a widow . . . a widow that can't marry again. . . .

CLEMENTINE

That sounds interesting.

JO

Oh, you must hear her tell it! Come, drink up your your coffee.

SAART

It sticks in my throat. What are you staring at, Knier? That's nothing but the wind. Now then! My husband was a funny fellow . . . you won't find another like him. You'd buy him a knife in a leather case . . . cost money, that . . . and when he came back from the trip five weeks later, you'd say, "Jacob, have you lost the knife?" then he'd say, "I don't know nothing about your knife. I didn't get any knife from you." That's all the good his head did him! But when he undressed . . . the first time in five weeks . . . and pulled off his sea boots . . . down fell the knife to the ground. . . . He hadn't felt it all that time!

CLEMENTINE

Five weeks without taking off his rubber boots?

SAART

Or his clothes! And then I had to scrub him with soap and soda . . . no wash water in all that time . . . and thick with lice!

CLEMENTINE

Oh, how awful!

SAART

I wish I could get a cent a dozen for all the dirty bugs on board ship! That's thrown in with their wages. Hahaha!

CLEMENTINE

But what about the Haarlem oil?

SAART

Now then! One day in a storm a big wave threw him against the bulwarks just when one of the crew hauled the mizzen to port . . . and bam . . . his leg was smashed! And there they were! The skipper could make a poultice or cut a corn, but mend a broken leg . . . no! The mate wanted to lash it to a board, but Jacob wouldn't have that . . . he wanted Haarlemmer oil. Every day they had to rub Haarlemmer oil on his leg . . . and again Haarlemmer oil, and over and over Haarlemmer oil! . . . Ach, Jezis! . . . the poor fellow! When they got home, his leg was past help. You oughtn't to have made me tell it.

JO

You laughed at it yourself the last time.

SAART

Yes, yes. Well, you can't bring the dead to life. And if you stop to think it over it's a dirty shame that I can't marry again!

CLEMENTINE

Can't marry? Who prevents you?

SAART

Who? The fools that muddle up our laws! A year later the Caprice went down with mice and men. . . . You'd sure think that if your man was dead . . . because Jacob had gone along with his leg and a half

. . . you could marry another man. Not much! You've got to put three times in the paper a notice that your husband is missing and then if three times you don't get any sign of life from him you can get a new license.

TRUUS

I don't think I will ever marry again.

SAART

Why should you? You've been married twice already . . . if you haven't had enough of men by this time . . .

TRUUS

I wish I could tell things the way you do. . . . No . . . it's too much anxiety! . . . I can't stand it. With my first it was a nightmare. . . .

CLEMENTINE

Tell us about it, Truus. I could sit night after night listening to these stories of the sea.

KNIERTJE

Don't tell us anything about death and anxiety!

SAART

Hé, don't grumble so! (*to* TRUUS.) Go on and tell it. (*to* JO.) Pour us some more coffee.

TRUUS (*knitting quietly and speaking in a toneless voice*)

It was years ago. . . . I lived in Vlaardingen then and I was a year married without children . . . Pietje is Arie's son. . . . My man sailed to the

herring grounds on the Magnet . . . and you know what happened. The Magnet went to the bottom somewhere . . . but I didn't know it and wasn't thinking of such a thing . . .

JO (*startled by a wild blast of wind*)
Sst! Be still a minute!

SAART
It's nothing . . . only the wind.

TRUUS
Now then . . . in Vlaardingen there is a tower, and on the tower is a lookout. . . .

MARIETJE (*knitting*)
They have that in Maassluis too. . . .

TRUUS
And the look-out hoists a red ball when he sights a lugger or a trawler or a sloop in the distance . . . and when he sees what ship it is . . . and it's wonderful how he can recognize a ship by its masts, by its rigging, by its sails, by the cut of its bow . . . then he hoists the red ball and runs to tell the owner and the families of the crew. But he don't need to tell the families, because as soon as the ball is hoisted the children run through the streets crying, "The ball's up! The ball's up!" I did it too when I was young. Then the women go to the tower and wait below until the lookout comes down and if it is their ship they give him money.

CLEMENTINE
And then? . . .

TRUUS (*staring into the fire*)

The Magnet with my first husband . . . I told you I had only been married a year . . . the Magnet stayed out seven weeks, eight weeks . . . with provisions for only six. And every time the children screamed, "The ball's up, Truus! The ball's up!" I ran like a crazy woman to the Tower, and when the lookout came down I could have torn the words out of his mouth . . . but I couldn't even ask, "Is it the Magnet?" . . . only stare at him . . . and he would say, "No, it's the Concordia, or the Maria, or the Fidelity." And I would drag myself away, crying and praying to God that he would bring the Magnet in safely. And the Magnet never came . . . never came. . . . That lasted for two months . . . two months . . . and then I had to believe it. (*tonelessly.*) The fish are dearly paid for!

CLEMENTINE (*fascinated*)

And Arie? What was it that happened to Arie?

JO

No, now . . . that happened such a little while ago.

TRUUS

Ach, child, I would like to talk about him to everybody and all day long. Such a splendid man . . . never a hard word from him. . . . Never! In two hours he was dead . . . a blow from the windlass . . . never spoke again. If it had happened a week later they could have brought him home to me . . . I could have buried him here . . . but the sharks were already swimming around the ship . . . they smell it when there's a dead man on board.

KNIERTJE

Yes, that's true.

TRUUS

You'll never know what it is to be a fisherman's wife, juffrouw . . . but it's heart-breaking . . . heart-breaking . . . God . . . how heart-breaking, when the one you love is lashed to a board, wrapped in a piece of sailcloth with a stone inside . . . and then . . . three times around the main mast . . . "One, two, three . . . in God's name!" The fish are dearly paid for!

[*She sobs softly.*

MARIETJE

It was that that made a drunkard of my father. When the Alert went down with Toontje, my little brother, and father brought home the wages that were coming to him as rope-caster . . . eighteen gulden . . . he acted as if he was crazy! . . . threw the money on the floor . . . and cursed . . . Cursed . . . I couldn't tell you what he said! And I . . . I was fourteen years old then . . . I picked up the money, crying . . . we had to have it. . . . Eighteen gulden is a lot of money . . . a lot!

JO

Eighteen gulden for your child! . . . eighteen. . . . (*a violent gust of wind startles them all.*) Be still a minute!

SAART

It's nothing at all. What makes you so easy frightened tonight?

JO

Frightened? I'm not frightened. Hahaha! Me . . . frightened!

KNIERTJE

Yes, yes! If the sea could speak . . .

CLEMENTINE

You tell us a story now, Kniertje. You have lived through so much.

KNIERTJE

Ach, juffrouw, life on the sea isn't a thing to make stories about. It is just work. The men work hard and the women work hard.

CLEMENTINE

But it must be so exciting!

KNIERTJE (*quietly*)

Just the thickness of a plank between you and eternity! (*a silence.*) Yesterday evening I went past the burgemeester house. They were sitting at the table and boiled codfish with livers sent up a thick steam. The children were saying grace with folded hands. Then I thought . . . if I was wrong, may God forgive me . . . that it was not good of the burgemeester . . . not of the burgemeester . . . not of other people! For the wind blew so terribly, so terribly off the sea . . . and the fish came out of the same water where our dead . . . how shall I say that . . . where our dead . . . (*after a silence.*) It isn't good to get such ideas . . . that is your living and you mustn't quarrel with your living.

TRUUS

Yes . . . she knows what she is talking about.

KNIERTJE

My husband was a fisherman . . . one in a thousand. When they dropped the lead he could tell by the sand they brought up just where they were. In the black nights he would say, "We are at 56," and they would be at 56. He felt it! What hasn't he gone through on the sea! Cut off from the ship by the fog . . . caught in a norther, fighting wind and water until the lugger sank under them . . . floating a day and a night on an over-turned row-boat with another man who had gone raving crazy from a blow on the head . . . he never talked much about such things, they were just a part of his work. And in the end he went down on the Doggersbank in the Clementine . . . the boat your father named after you . . . he and my two oldest sons. That was twelve years ago. What happened to them I don't know . . . shall never know. Never a hatch nor a spar from the ship was washed ashore. Nothing. Nothing. At first it seemed as if it couldn't be true, but after so many years, you don't even remember their faces well any more. And for that you are thankful. It would be terrible if you should remember always. Now you have my story too. Every seaman's wife has such things in her family. Truus is right. The fish are dearly paid for. Are you crying, juffrouw?

CLEMENTINE (*bursting into tears*)

God! If only no ships go down tonight!

KNIERTJE

We are all in God's hands . . . and God is great and good.

CLEMENTINE

If only no ships go down tonight!

JO (*starting up wildly*)

Ships go down! Ships go down! You are enough to drive anyone crazy! (*pounding her head with her fists.*) One snivels . . . another bawls . . . I wish that I had sat by myself tonight!

CLEMENTINE (*alarmed*)

Jo, what is the matter?

JO (*passionately*)

Her husband . . . and her little brother . . . and my poor uncle! Such horrible stories! Instead of trying to cheer each other up! Why don't you ask *me* something? (*screaming.*) My father was drowned! . . . drowned! . . . drowned! And hundreds more have been drowned! And . . . and you are all horrible . . . horrible . . . horrible!

[*Rushes out shutting the door violently behind her.*

MARIETJE

Shall I go after her?

KNIERTJE

No, child. Let her alone. She will come to herself outside. These two days of the storm have been too much for her. Are you going, juffrouw?

CLEMENTINE

It is late, Knier . . . and your niece . . . your

niece forgot herself a little . . . no, I am not angry. Who will take me home?

SAART

If one goes, we'll all go. If we stick together we won't blow away. Good night, Knier.

MARIETJE

Good night, tante.

KNIERTJE

Thank you again, juffrouw, for the broth and the eggs.

TRUUS

Will you come to my house tomorrow for a bowl of coffee? Please now, say yes.

KNIERTJE

Well, perhaps. Good night, juffrouw. Good night, Marietje, good night, Saart. If you see Jo, send her in right away, will you?

[*The wind shrieks, sweeping wildly around the house . . . she listens anxiously at the window . . . turns and gathers up the bowls . . . pushes a chair close to the fire . . . stares into the flames, her lips moving silently as she slips her rosary through her fingers . . .* JO *comes in, drops into a chair by the window and unfastens her neckerchief nervously.*

It's good that you are going to bed . . . you are all upset. How you talked! And that dear child that came through wind and weather to bring me broth and eggs!

JO (*roughly*)

Your sons are out in wind and weather for her and her father. . . .

KNIERTJE

For us too. . . .

JO

Yes, for us too. . . . (*A silence.*) The sea is so wild!

KNIERTJE

Did you go down to look?

JO

I couldn't stand up against the wind. The pier is under water . . . half the railing is washed away! (*a silence.*) I'm half crazy from those dreadful stories!

KNIERTJE

I don't understand you tonight. You never acted like this when Geert went away with the Marines. Go to bed now and pray. Praying is the only comfort. A sailor's wife can't be weak. . . . After this storm there will be others . . . there are always storms . . . and there are other fishermen on the sea beside our boys!

[*Her words sink into soft whispers . . . her old fingers touch the rosary gently.*

JO (*suddenly*)

We almost drove Barend away . . . I nagged at him till the last minute.

[*Seeing that* KNIERTJE *is praying again she goes to the window, wringing her hands . . . pulls the cur-*

*tain up hesitatingly, stares into the night . . . then cautiously opens a swinging pane. The wind swells the curtain out . . . the lamp flame dances . . . goes out. She closes the window quickly.*

KNIERTJE (*startled and angry*)
Now that's a crazy trick! Keep your paws off the window.

JO (*moaning*)
Oh! Oh! Oh!

KNIERTJE (*alarmed*)
Will you be quiet! Bring me the matches! Hurry up a little! They're by the soap dish. Have you got them? (JO *lights the lamp, sobbing.*) I'm cold all over from that wind! (JO *crouches by the fire, crying.*) Why do you sit like that?

JO (*shivering*)
I'm afraid.

KNIERTJE (*anxiously*)
You mustn't be afraid.

JO
If anything happens then . . . then . . .

KNIERTJE
Be sensible now and undress yourself for bed.

JO
I'm going to stay here all night.

KNIERTJE
I ask you now . . . how are you going to stand it

. . . when you are married . . . when you're a mother yourself!

JO (*wildly*)

You don't know what you're saying, tante . . . you don't know what you're saying! If Geert . . . (*breathes heavily.*) I haven't dared to tell you. . . .

KNIERTJE

Is there something between you and Geert? . . . (Jo *sobs harder.*) That wasn't nice of you . . . to have secrets from me. Your sweetheart . . . your man . . . is my son. (*a silence . . . the wind shrieks.*) Don't cry any more . . . don't stare into the fire like that . . . I won't say any hard words to you . . . though it was wrong . . . of you and of him. Come sit beside me, and we will pray together.

JO (*despairingly*)

I will not pray!

KNIERTJE

Not pray!

JO (*distracted*)

If anything should happen . . .

KNIERTJE

Nothing will happen.

JO (*wildly*)

If anything . . . anything . . . anything . . . then I'll never pray again . . . never! Then there is no God and no Mother Mary . . . then there is nothing . . . nothing!

KNIERTJE
Don't talk like that.

JO (*wailing*)
What can you do with a child . . . when you haven't got a husband!

KNIERTJE
What are you saying?

JO (*beating her head on the table*)
The wind . . . the wind . . . is driving me crazy . . . crazy. . . .
[KNIERTJE *opens her prayer book, touches* JO *on the arm.* JO *shakes her head, pushes the prayer book away, lets her head drop on the table again, sobbing passionately. The wind sweeps furiously around the house.*

KNIERTJE
Almighty God, I believe in your love with a confident faith. . . . I believe . . . in your eternal compassion—

*Curtain*

## ACT IV

*One week later.*

*The office of Clemens Bos. Right, down stage, the outside door, separated from the office by a railing. Between the door and the railing are two wooden benches. In the back, three windows looking out on the sea, dancing in the sunshine. In front of the middle window a desk. Left down stage, a desk. Upstage, Left a door leading to the dwelling. Between the desk and the door, a safe. On the walls, a blackboard with notices of wreckage, auctions . . . maps, a picture of a ship. In the center of the office a large round iron stove.*

MATHILDE (*entering from the dwelling rooms*)
Clemens!

KAPS (*reading, his pipe in his mouth*)
"The following articles of wreckage . . . 2447 ribs, marked 'Kusta' . . . 10 sails, marked 'M.G.S.'" . . .

MATHILDE
Be still a minute, Kaps. *Bos!*

KAPS
"4 deck timbers, 2 masts, 5 towing lines. . . ."

BOS (*impatiently*) I have no time now.

MATHILDE
Then make time. I have drawn up the circular for

the tower clock subscription. Please ring up the burgemeester.

BOS (*taking up the telephone impatiently*)

Hello! Connect me with the burgemeester. Hurry up now. (*waits.*) This damn nonsense while I'm up to my ears in work! (*through the telephone, pleasantly.*) Are you there, burgemeester? My little wife asks . . .

MATHILDE

If mevrouw will come to the telephone a minute about the subscription.

BOS (*disagreeably*)

Now, now! Make it short! (*pleasantly.*) Can mevrouw come to the telephone a minute? Exactly, burgemeester. The ladies . . . you understand. Hahaha! That's very good. (*sharply, to* MATHILDE.) Now, what am I to say? Hurry!

MATHILDE

Here, read the circular to her. Then it can go to the printer.

BOS (*furiously*)

All that? Are you crazy? Do you think I haven't got anything to do?

MATHILDE

Think of appearances a little!

[*With a look at* KAPS.

BOS

You go to hell! (*pleasantly.*) Yes, mevrouw, Good

morning, mevrouw. My little wife? No, she can't come to the telephone. She doesn't know how to use it. (*to* MATHILDE.) Where is that rag? Quick now! (*pleasantly.*) My little wife has written out the subscription sheet for the tower clock . . . I'll read it to you. . . . Can you hear? "Ladies and Gentlemen," What do you say? What do you say? You would like better, "Dear Fellow Citizens" . . . Yes, yes. Quite right. Can you hear me? "You have undoubtedly heard of the New Church" (*to* MATHILDE) she says "no" . . . the stupid thing! Yes, mevrouw, I'm reading . . . "You have undoubtedly heard of the New Church. This church as you know has a high tower. This tower points to Heaven, and that is good . . . that is fortunate, and indeed a necessary reminder for the people of this generation."

MATHILDE

Read more distinctly.

BOS

Hold your jaw! Pardon, I was speaking to my bookkeeper. Yes, yes! Hahaha! "But the tower can do something else, which is also good and also necessary . . . it can indicate the time to us, the children of these times. That it does not do. It has stood there since 1882 and has never given an answer to the question, 'What time is it?' It should do that. It was built for that purpose. The citizens wish it." Did you say something, mevrouw? No? "About three thousand gulden will be necessary. Who will help us?" What did you say, mevrouw? Of course you know the names. Yes, yes . . . very well drawn up. Yes,

yes . . . all the ladies of the Committee will naturally subscribe the same amount. A hundred gulden each. Yes, very good. Yes, my wife will be at home. Goodby, mevrouw. (*Hangs up the receiver ill-humoredly.*) Damned nonsense! A hundred gulden thrown to the dogs! What difference does it make to you if there is a clock on that thing or not!

MATHILDE

I'll just let you stew in your own juice.

BOS

She'll be here in fifteen minutes in her carriage. Now, get out.

[*Turns back to his desk.*

MATHILDE

Get out! Get out! If you drank less grog at night you wouldn't be in such a bad humor in the morning. Give me five gulden.

BOS

No. You took two gulden out of my pocket this morning while I was asleep . . . I can't keep up with you.

MATHILDE

Bah! . . . what a man! . . . to count his money before he goes to bed. I only took one gulden.

BOS

Get out!

MATHILDE

Don't give it to me then. When the burgemeester's

wife comes I can treat her to a glass of gin. Three jugs of your nasty gin in the house and not a bottle of port or sherry! (BOS *throws her some money impatiently.*) Well, am I your servant! Without me you wouldn't be able to throw money around like that.

[*Goes off.*

KAPS (*reading*)

"Ijmuiden, December 24 . . . today five sloops came into port with 500 to 800 live haddock each, 1500 to 2100 dead haddock and a quantity of live codfish. . . ."

BOS

Is that all you've got to do?

KAPS

"The live codfish brought seven and a quarter and the dead haddock brought thirteen and a half gulden a basket . . . flat fish and ray brought" . . .

BOS (*pounding on the desk*)

I know all that. Here, take this ledger. Turn to the Expectation's account. Set this down.

KAPS (*turning the pages*)

The Jacoba . . . the Queen Wilhelmina . . . the Matilda . . . the Good Hope . . . you can whistle for her! . . . here it is . . . the Expectation. . . .

BOS

What is the gross sum?

KAPS

144,347 gulden.

BOS

I thought so. How could you have been so ungodly stupid as to deduct four gulden and eighty-eight cents for the Widows and Orphans fund? (*getting up angrily.*) If you're on the way to become a complete idiot, you blockhead . . . there's the door open for you. You make mistakes the whole goddamned time and always against us.

KAPS (*laughing confidentially*)

I might say something in my defense, meneer. I didn't get a tongue-lashing when . . . when . . .

BOS

That's enough now. . . .

KAPS

And *that* was a mistake with a couple of big zeroes behind it! héhéhé!

[BOS *goes out impatiently.*

[KAPS *fills his pipe from* BOS' *tobacco jar, pokes the fire, looks up as* SIMON *enters.*

SIMON

Isn't Bos here?

KAPS

Meneer Bos, eh? No.

SIMON

Is he out?

KAPS

Give me your message.

SIMON

I ask you if he is out.

KAPS

Yes.

SIMON

No news yet?

KAPS

No. Is that running to the office going to begin again? Meneer said he would tell you when he had any news.

SIMON

It will be nine weeks tomorrow.

KAPS

What of it? The Jacoba came in after fifty-nine days and brought in a hundred and ninety quintals.

SIMON

You know something.

KAPS

Are you full of gin this early?

SIMON

No, not a drop.

KAPS

Then it's time you were! I know something? Do I pull the ships in by a rope?

SIMON

I gave you warning when she still was in dry docks. . . . What did I say to you then?

KAPS

A lot of crazy talk trying to stick somebody for a drink.

SIMON

You lie! You were there and the juffrouw was there. . . . I said the whole ship was rotten . . . that the damn thing couldn't be patched up any more . . . that such a floating coffin . . .

KAPS

Yes, you said all that. I won't argue about that. But what of it? Are you so important that we have to listen to you even when you're dead drunk?

SIMON

That's a damn lie! I wasn't drunk!

KAPS

All right then, you weren't drunk. Are you such a little god that when you, the ship builder's assistant, say "no," my patron must take his ship and scrap it, even when the insurance company says "yes."

SIMON

I gave you warning . . . and now I say . . . now I say . . . that if Mees, my daughter's sweetheart . . . if Mees . . . to say nothing of the others . . . there'll be murder done!

KAPS

How funny you are! Go get a few drinks inside of you then perhaps you can talk sense.

SIMON (*as* MARIETJE *comes through the door*)

You ought to have stayed outside. There's no news.

MARIETJE
No news yet?

SIMON
I tell you there'll be murder done!
[*They go out.*

BOS (*coming back*)
Who was here?

KAPS
Simon and his daughter. Threatening you. Are you going out?

BOS
Threatening? Is the fellow crazy? I'll be back in ten minutes. . . . Whoever comes will have to wait.
[*Goes off.*

KAPS (*as the telephone rings*)
I can't understand you! I am the book-keeper. Meneer will be back in ten minutes. You must ring up again.
[*He turns as* SAART *comes in.*

SAART
'Day, sweetheart.

KAPS
What do you want now!

SAART
I want you. Jezis, what a cold wind! Can I warm my hands a little?

KAPS
Keep back of the railing.

SAART

You go to the devil sweetheart! Meneer Bos isn't here . . . he just went round the corner. I didn't come to ask about the Good Hope.

[*Edges through the gate of the railing and warms her hands at the stove.*

KAPS

I wish you'd get back of the railing.

[*Tries to push her out.*

SAART (*peering into his coat pocket*)

Look out! Haha! Don't break meneer's cigars, you old thief! Kaps, would you like to earn a gulden from me?

KAPS

That depends.

SAART

I've promised to marry Bol, the skipper.

KAPS

Congratulations.

SAART

He's lying here at the dock with a load of manure for the city. And now, how am I going to marry him?

KAPS

How? . . .

SAART

I can't marry yet because they don't know if my husband is dead.

KAPS

The legal time is . . . is . . .

SAART

I'm that smart myself.

KAPS

You must put a notice in the paper three times and if he doesn't come back . . . and he won't come back for there are no spooks in this world . . . then you can get a new license.

SAART

If you would just do that for us, Bol and I would be thankful to you always.

KAPS

Lawyers' work. You have to go to the city for that.

SAART

Jezis! What a lot of bother! When your good sense tells you! I haven't seen Jacob for three years! and the Caprice—

COBUS (*pushing the door open trembling with agitation*)

You have news! You have news!

KAPS

News? What are you talking about?

COBUS (*his voice shaking*)

You have some news of the Good Hope . . . of . . . of the boys?

KAPS

Nothing. (*more kindly.*) What good does it do to

wear out the floor of the office running here day after day? I can give you neither good news nor bad news . . . the bad you know yourself, anyway . . . sixty-five days out . . .

COBUS

The water-bailiff got a telegram . . . Ach, ach, ach, meneer Kaps . . . help us out of this uncertainty. My sister and my niece . . . are out of their heads with anxiety.

KAPS

On my word of honor, there is nothing. Are you going?

COBUS

There must be something . . . there must be something!

KAPS

Who told you there was news?

COBUS

The water-bailiff's clerk said . . . ach, dear God! [*Goes off.*

SAART

Perhaps he's right.

KAPS

Anything can happen.

SAART

Does meneer Bos still have hope?

KAPS

Hope? After nine weeks . . . that death ship . . . in such a storm! Provisions for only six weeks! I wouldn't give a penny for their chances. If they had run into an English port we would have had news.

CLEMENTINE (*coming in from the street*)

Are there visitors in the house, Kaps? 'Day, Saart. Whose carriage is that outside?

KAPS (*looking out of the window*)

The burgemeester. . . . A committee meeting for the tower clock subscription. Another new span of horses! . . . I wish I had the money they cost!

CLEMENTINE (*laying her sketch book on the desk*)

I saw Cobus walking down the street. Poor fellow! How old he has grown! I would hardly have recognized him.

[*Opening the sketch book.*

See! That's the way he looked three months ago. Jolly . . . lively! You can look too, Kaps.

KAPS

No, juffrouw, I haven't time.

SAART

He took Daantje's death very hard. You always saw those two together . . . always arguing about something. He hasn't a friend left in the Home now. It makes a lot of difference to him.

CLEMENTINE

Do you recognize the others?

SAART

I should say! That's Kniertje . . . that's Barend with the wood basket on his back . . . and that's . . .

[*The telephone rings.*

KAPS

Meneer is out. Someone called up a little while ago.

CLEMENTINE (*taking the telephone*)

Yes? Father isn't here. How long will he be gone, Kaps?

KAPS

Only a few minutes.

CLEMENTINE (*startled*)

What do you say? A hatch marked 47? and . . . I don't understand you. . . .

[*Screams and drops the receiver.*

KAPS

What is it? What is it?

CLEMENTINE (*terribly agitated*)

I can't listen any more. . . . Oh, oh!

KAPS

Was that the water-bailiff?

CLEMENTINE

Barend's body has been washed ashore! Oh, God! . . . now it's all over!

SAART

Barend? Barend?

CLEMENTINE

A telegram from Nieuwediep . . . a hatch . . . and a body!

BOS

What's going on here? What are you crying about, girl?

KAPS

News of the Good Hope.

BOS

News?

KAPS

The water-bailiff is on the phone.

BOS

The water-bailiff? (*pushing* CLEMENTINE *away.*) Stand aside! Get out of my way! (*to* SAART.) What are you gaping at?

SAART

I . . . I . . .

[*She hurries out.*

BOS

Hello! Who is there? The water-bailiff? A telegram from Nieuwediep? I can't hear a word! (*to* CLEMENTINE.) Stop that howling! A hatch, you say? Marked 47—Hell and damnation! And a body . . . in a state of decomposition? Barend Vermeer, signed on as head boy? Recognized by who? Who? Oh, the skipper of the Expectation. By his ear-rings? Yes, yes, silver ear-rings. That is sufficient then. It won't

be necessary to send anyone from here to identify the body? Curse the luck! This village is cursed! Well, well . . . against God's will we are powerless. Yes, yes. I have been sure of it for some time. Thank you. Yes. I would like to have the official report as soon as possible. I will notify the underwriters. Goodby! (*hangs up the receiver heavily.*) That's a blow! A knock out blow! Twelve men!

KAPS

Barend, the son of old Kniertje? Washed ashore! Now, that's astonishing. I thought we'd never hear anything more of that ship . . . like the Clementine.

BOS (*angrily*)

Yes, yes, yes. (*to* CLEMENTINE.) Will you be good enough to go inside there with your mother! What stupidity to talk before that woman . . . now inside of five minutes half the village will be here . . . Don't you hear me? You sit there, God help you, going on as if your sweetheart had been on board.

CLEMENTINE (*still sobbing*)

Why didn't you listen to Simon?

BOS

The fellow was drunk.

CLEMENTINE (*emphatically*)

He was not drunk!

BOS

He was! And if he wasn't, why do you stick your nose into things that are none of your business!

CLEMENTINE

I am guilty too. . . .

BOS (*furiously*)

Guilty! Guilty! Have the novels you have read addled your brain? Guilty! Are you out of your head to use such words about a misfortune . . . a visitation. . . .

CLEMENTINE

He said the ship was a floating coffin . . . and I heard . . . I heard you say that in any event it would be the last voyage of the Good Hope. . . .

BOS (*beginning angrily, but ending argumentatively*)

That cursed boarding school . . . those damned boarding school notions! Run around the village as much as you like making a fool of yourself sketching the loafers and beggars you meet . . . but don't go blurting out things that you have no foundation for. What do you know about affairs here? A floating coffin! Did you hear him say that, Kaps?

KAPS (*uneasily*)

No, meneer, I heard nothing.

BOS

A floating coffin! An authority floating in gin! The Discovery and the Willem III and Pietersen's North Wind and the Jonge Jan . . . I can name a hundred . . . half the fishing fleet and half the freight boats are floating coffins. . . .

CLEMENTINE

But, father . . .

BOS

. . . What do you need more than the yearly inspection of the ship by the underwriters? Do you think that when I call them up presently and say, "Gentlemen, you can plank down fourteen thousand gulden!" that they would pay that on a floating coffin? Your face should be burning with shame at the thought of the nonsense that you have been babbling! Nonsense? Nonsense, that might ruin my good name if I was not so well known by everybody!

CLEMENTINE

If I was a ship owner . . . and I heard . . .

BOS

May God protect the fishermen from a ship owner who draws little pictures and sheds tears over pretty poetry! I stand as father and protector to more than a hundred families. Business is business. Now, go to your mother. The burgemeester's wife is making a call.

KAPS

I have the list of the crew here. (*begins to read.*) Willem Hengst, 37 years, married, four children.

BOS

Wait until she goes.

CLEMENTINE

I won't say another word.

KAPS (*continuing*)

Jacob Swart, 35 years, married, three children. Ger-

rit Plaas, 25 years, married, one child. Geert Vermeer, 26 years, unmarried. Nelis Boom, 35 years, married, seven children. Klaas Steen, 25 years, married. Salomon Bergen, 25 years, married, one child. Mari Stad, married. Mees Meijer, 19, unmarried. Jacob Boom, 20 years. Barend Vermeer, 18 years and Pietje Stappers, 12 years.

BOS (*shocked*)
Seven families.

CLEMENTINE
Sixteen children.

TRUUS (*throwing open the door, gasping for breath*)
Is there news? Is there any news of my little son? Ach, God! Ach, God! Have pity on me, meneer!

BOS
I'm sorry, mevrouw Stappers. . . .

MARIETJE (*following on the heels of* TRUUS)
It can't be! It can't be! You lie! It isn't possible.

BOS (*gently*)
The beach-inspector at Nieuwediep telegraphed to the water-bailiff . . . the body of Barend Vermeer had been washed ashore . . . you know what that means . . . and a hatch from the Good Hope.

TRUUS (*violently*)
Oh, Mother Mary, must I lose that child too! That lamb . . . not twelve years old! (*moaning and sobbing.*) Oh, Oh! Oh! Pietje! Pietje!

MARIETJE (*wild with grief*)

Then . . . then . . . (*she bursts into hysterical laughter.*) Hahaha! Hahaha!

BOS

Give her a glass of water.

MARIETJE (*dashing the glass from* CLEMENTINE's *hand*)

Go away! Go away! (*falling on her knees, grasping the railing with both hands.*) Kill me too! Let me die too . . . in mercy . . . dear God! . . . dear God!

CLEMENTINE (*sobbing*)

Please, Marietje . . . don't scream so . . . stand up. . . .

TRUUS

On his first voyage . . . and how brave he stood there waving, when the ship . . .

[*Sobs violently.*

BOS

It can't be helped, Truus. It is an act of God. There hasn't been such a storm in years. Think of Hengst with four children, and Jacob and Gerrit. And . . . though it will be no consolation to you now . . . I will pay you your little son's wages . . . today if you like. Go home now, and resign yourselves to the inevitable. (*Pointing to* MARIETJE.) Take her with you. . . . She's not fit to go alone.

MARIETJE

I won't go home. . . . I want to die . . . to die! . . . to die!

CLEMENTINE (*lifting her up*)

Cry it out, Marietje . . . cry it out, you poor lamb. . . .

[*They go out together.*

BOS (*to* KAPS, *striding up and down angrily*)

Why are you so stupid today? Are you too lazy to put pen to paper? No, I don't want any answer from you. Have you the Widows and Orphans Fund ledger at hand? Now? Now?

KAPS (*shuffling to the safe*)

The compartment is locked. (BOS *throws him the keys.*) Thank you.

[*Takes out the ledger and shuffles back to the desk.*

BOS (*turning over the leaves*)

Ninety-five widows . . . fourteen old seamen and fishermen. . . .

KAPS

Yes, we have been short of funds for a long time. It is time to send another petition to the public.

MATHILDE (*entering in a flurry*)

Bos! What a catastrophe! The burgemeester's wife asks if you can come in to talk to her a moment. She sits there crying!

BOS

No. Enough bawling here. And no time!

MATHILDE

Ach! Ach! Kaps, here is the draft of the circular. Hurry with it please.

BOS

Mathilde! Talk to mevrouw right away about taking up a collection for the unfortunate victims.

MATHILDE

Yes, but Clemens . . . isn't that too much? Two subscriptions at the same time?

BOS

Leave it to me, then.

[*They go off together.*

CLEMENTINE (*coming back crying softly*)

Kaps! Kaps, I am so terribly unhappy! (*goes over to him and sits down by the desk.*) I'm heart sick!

KAPS

Absolutely without reason, juffrouw. Ships founder every day. Among so many the Good Hope hardly counts. I have here . . . where is it . . . where is it? The official statement for the month of October. In one month . . . in one month only . . . 105 sail ships went down and 30 steam ships. That's considered a small average . . . only fifteen hundred drowned. (*he points to the sea.*) Yes, when you see it as it is today, so smooth, with the sea gulls floating on the waves . . . you can hardly believe that it has murdered so many people. . . .

[*While they are talking* CORUS *and* JO *come in and sit down dejectedly on the bench outside the railing.*

CLEMENTINE

Come in, Jo . . . come in!

[JO *shakes her head.*

COBUS (*trembling*)

We have just come from the house . . . because Saart . . . just as I said! . . . just as I said. . . .

BOS (*coming back from the dwelling rooms*)

Come in, Jo . . . sit down. (*he pushes a chair near the stove.*) You stay there, Cobus . . . I suppose you have already heard. . . .

JO (*bursting into tears*)

About Barend, yes . . . but Geert . . . and it happens so often that they drift in row boats. . . .

BOS

No, I can't give you that hope . . . after all those days . . . and the body was in an advanced state of decomposition. . . .

JO (*anxiously*)

Yes, yes. Then perhaps it isn't Barend. Who says that it is Barend?

BOS

Skipper Maatsuiker of the Expectation identified him . . . by the ear-rings.

JO

Maatsuiker? Maatsuiker? But suppose he made a mistake . . . there are other ear-rings. I came to ask you for some money, meneer, so I can go myself to Nieuwediep.

BOS

Come now, what foolishness!

JO (*crying*)

But Barend will have to be buried. . . .

BOS

The Burgemeester of Nieuwediep will attend to that.

SIMON (*lurching in from the street, half drunk*)

I . . . I've just heard . . . just heard . . .

[*Staggers toward* BOS *with convulsive gestures.*

BOS (*drawing back in fear*)

Get out of here, you drunken beast!

SIMON (*stammering*)

I . . . I'm not going to kill you . . . I have . . . have . . . haven't anything wicked in my mind. . . .

BOS (*agitated*)

Call a guard, Kaps . . . this drunken fellow must . . .

SIMON (*holding himself up by the railing*)

No . . . stay there. I'll go myself . . . I . . . I . . . only wanted to say . . . that it's come out fine . . . with . . . with the Good Hope!

BOS

Get to hell out of here!

SIMON (*reeling almost losing his balance*)

Don't come so close to me . . . you must never get too close to a man with a knife! Nooo! I don't mean anything wicked . . . I just want to say that I gave you warning . . . while . . . the ship was still in dry dock!

BOS
You lie, you drunken rascal!

SIMON (*more quietly*)
Now you must . . . just for the fun of it . . . you must . . . you must ask your book-keeper . . . and your daughter . . . who were there. . . .

BOS (*violently*)
That's a lie! You're not worth answering, you drunken sot! My dealings are with your employer, not with you. Didn't you hear me, Kaps? The guard!

SIMON (*waving back and forth on his unsteady feet*)
My employer . . . he . . . he doesn't do the caulking! (*to* KAPS, *who has approached the railing.*) Did I warn him? Were you there? Yes or no!

KAPS (*looking anxiously to* BOS)
No, I wasn't there . . . and if I was there, I didn't hear anything.

BOS (*to* CLEMENTINE)
And you now? Did this drunkard . . .

CLEMENTINE (*almost hysterical*)
Father!

BOS (*threateningly*)
You, as my daughter . . . (*grimly*) give your answer.

CLEMENTINE (*agitated—in a low voice*)
I don't remember. . . .

SIMON

That's mean . . . that's low . . . that's damned low! I said the ship was rotten . . . rotten . . .

BOS

A drunkard's ravings! You try to drag my daughter and my book-keeper into it . . . and you see . . .

COBUS (*trembling*)

But . . . yes, now . . . I remember it too!

BOS

What the devil! Did you give me warning too?

COBUS

No . . . I don't say that. That would be a lie. But your daughter . . . your daughter, she said just now that she never heard that the ship was rotten. . . . But the second night of the storm, when she was alone with me at my sister Kniertje's . . . then she said . . . that . . . that . . .

CLEMENTINE (*her voice shaking*)

Did I . . .

COBUS (*angrily*)

Yes. That you did. That very evening . . . and I said . . . these were my words, "Now, you sit there talking nonsense . . . because if your father knew that the Good Hope was rotten . . ."

CLEMENTINE

I—I—

JO (*springing up passionately, the words struggling furiously between clenched teeth*)
You . . . you lie! You began to cry! You were afraid the ship would sink! I was there! Truus was there! . . . Saart was there! Oh, you vipers! You vipers!

BOS (*pounding the desk with his fist*)
Vipers? Vipers? We who have given you your food year after year, you vermin! Haven't you the decency to believe us instead of this filthy rascal who stands there wabbling on his drunken legs?

JO (*raving*)
Believe you? You? She lies and you lie! . . .

BOS
Out of my office!

JO (*beside herself*)
You had Barend dragged on board by the coast guard . . . he knew the ship was rotten! Geert was too proud to be afraid! . . . Murderer! Murderer! (*laughing hysterically.*) No, no! You don't need to point to the door . . . we're going. If I stayed here any longer I'd spit in your face . . . spit in your face! . . .

COBUS (*holding her back*)
Now! Now!

BOS (*after a silence*)
Out of respect for your aunt, who is a decent woman, I will take it that you are overwrought . . . other-

wise . . . otherwise . . . (*firmly*) The Good Hope was seaworthy . . . perfectly seaworthy. (*a silence.*) I am standing a big loss, even though the ship is insured. And even if that fellow *had* warned me, should I, as a business man trust the word of a sot who was thrown out of his job because he is unfit to handle his tools any longer?

SIMON (*stuttering*)

I . . . I . . . I said to you and to him and to her . . . that a floating coffin like that . . . That's the truth now!

JO (*passionately*)

Oh! Oh! Geert and Barend and Mees and all the others. (*sinks into a chair sobbing.*) Oh, God, how could you let it happen . . . how could you! . . . (*to* BOS, *after a silence.*) Give me the money to go myself to Nieuwediep . . . then I'll say nothing more.

BOS (*grimly*)

No. Not a red cent. A girl that has clapper-clawed me so impudently. . . .

JO (*completely unnerved*)

I didn't know what I was saying . . . and . . . and . . . I don't believe that you . . . that you! . . . then you would be more wicked than the devil!

BOS

The water-bailiff says that it isn't necessary to send anyone to Nieuwediep.

JO (*stumbling to the door*)

Not necessary! Not necessary! what will become of me now! . . .

[COBUS *and* SIMON *follow her out.*

[BOS *strides up and down.* KAPS *climbs on his stool and buries his head in his ledgers.*

BOS (*to* CLEMENTINE, *stopping suddenly*)

And if you ever set foot in my office again . . .

CLEMENTINE

No. Never again. (*a silence.*) Father, I ask myself . . . can I ever respect you again? Can I ever respect myself again?

[*Goes out.*

BOS

If anyone else comes, send them away . . . understand? Trash! Rabble! The whole pack isn't worth the snap of my finger! That damned drunken rag . . . stinking of gin! (JELLE'S *violin is heard outside.*) And that . . . we have to have too! (*at the window.*) Get out! No, not one penny. (*the music stops.*) I'm completely upset! (*he drops into his chair . . . sits a moment in thought, then turns to the telephone.*) Hallo! Give me Dirksen . . . Dirksen, I say . . . the underwriter. Hallo! Are you there, Dirksen? It's all up with the Good Hope! A hatch with my number washed ashore and the body of one of the sailors. (*in a belligerent tone.*) What do you mean? Well, I should say not! No question about it. Sixty-five days . . the probability is so strong . . . (*calming down.*) Good . . . I'll wait

for you in my office . . . but as soon as possible, eh! Yes . . . fourteen thousand gulden. Goodby.
[*Hangs up the receiver.*

KNIERTJE (*comes in during the last words, her manner vague and bewildered . . . she sinks down on the bench crying quietly*)
I . . . I . . .

BOS (*without seeing her, looking into the safe*)
Have you moved the portfolio with the insurance policies? Confound you . . . you get everything out of place!

KAPS (*pointing from his stool*)
The portfolio is higher up . . . behind the box of bonds.

BOS (*snarling*)
Just hold your tongue! (*turning with the portfolio in his hand, sees* KNIERTJE.) Can't you knock?

KNIERTJE (*patiently*)
I would like . . .

BOS (*unpleasantly*)
You come five minutes too late. That girl that lives with you has just been raising such a row here that with a little more I would have telephoned for the guard! (*gruffly.*) Come in then. Shut the gate behind you.

KNIERTJE (*feebly*)
Is it true? . . . is it true that . . . the pastor said . . . (BOS *nods sombrely.*) Oh! Oh!
[*Her eyes stare vacantly . . . her arms fall inert.*

BOS

For you . . . for you I feel sympathy. I have known you always as a decent woman . . . your husband was an honest man . . . but your children . . . it is a hard thing to say after the blow you have had . . . your sons and your niece have never been worth much. (KNIERTJE's *head sinks lower on her breast.*) Think of the years you worked for me . . . until your son Geert threatened me with his fist, mocked at my gray hairs, and almost threw me out of your house. And your other son . . . (*stops in alarm.*) Kniertje! Knier! (*he springs to his feet.*) Kaps! Bring water! (*bathing her wrists and her forehead.*) Damn it! Damn it all!

KAPS

Shall I call mevrouw or the young lady?

BOS

No. Stay here. She's coming to.

[KNIERTJE *sits motionless for a while staring with unseeing eyes, then begins to sob silently.*

KAPS

Knier . . .

KNIERTJE (*pathetically, her words broken by sobs*)

He didn't want to go! He didn't want to go! . . . and with my own hands I tore his fingers loose from the doorpost.

BOS

You have nothing to reproach yourself with.

KNIERTJE (*despairingly*)
Before he went I hung his father's ear-rings in his ears . . . decking him out like a lamb for the sacrifice. . . .

BOS
Come now. . . .

KNIERTJE
And my oldest son . . . I didn't go to tell him goodby! "If you are too late," those were his last words, "I'll never lay eyes on you again!" . . . never again . . . never again!

BOS
Be still! . . . in God's name, be still!

KNIERTJE
Twelve years ago . . . with the Clementine . . . I sat here like this. . . .
[*She sobs into her trembling old hands.*

BOS (*trying to master the emotion which is taking possession of him*)
Be brave now, Kniertje . . . be brave. . . .

MATHILDE (*bustling in*)
Clemens, I . . . Ach, poor dear Knier! How sorry I am for you! It is terrible . . . it is frightful! . . . both your sons!

KNIERTJE (*staring*)
My husband and four sons!

MATHILDE (*consolingly*)
But don't be worried now! We are starting a sub-

scription . . . the burgemeester's wife and I have written the notice and it goes into the paper tomorrow. Here, Kaps! (BOS *motions to* KNIERTJE *to go.*) Let her wait a minute, Clemens. I have a couple of cold chops . . . that will do her good . . . and . . . and . . . let's forget the past. You don't object if she comes again for the cleaning? We won't forget you, Knier . . . do you hear? Goodby. Be strong. . . .

[*She goes out.*

BOS

No, we won't forget you.

KNIERTJE (*in a toneless voice*)

Now my only hope is the child. . . .

BOS

The child?

KNIERTJE

The child of my niece . . . yes, that misfortune comes too . . . she will have a child by my son. (*smiling feebly.*) But no, that isn't a misfortune. . . .

BOS

And you tell me that as if it was nothing! Did you allow such ungodliness under your own roof? Don't you know the rule of the Widow's and Orphan's Fund? . . . that no assistance can be given to anyone who leads an immoral life, or whose conduct, in our opinion is not worthy.

KNIERTJE (*dully*)

The gentlemen must decide themselves what they will do for me . . . the gentlemen. . . .

BOS

There will be difficulties with the committee . . . the directors of the Fund. . . . Well, I will do the best I can . . . I give you my word for that . . . but promise anything . . . that I can't do. There are seven new families that will expect assistance and sixteen new orphans. (*getting up and shutting the safe.*) Wait here a little longer . . . my wife wants to give you something to take home.

[*Goes out.*

MATHILDE (*from behind the scenes*)

Kaps! Kaps!

[KAPS *gets up, goes out and comes back with a covered dish and a small enameled pan.*

KAPS (*good naturedly*)

You are to bring the dish back when you have time and you are to come for the cleaning again on Saturday.

[KNIERTJE *stares unseeingly . . . he puts the dishes in her lap and folds her limp hands around them then shuffles back to his desk.* KNIERTJE *sits dazed and motionless . . . her lips move wordlessly—at last she gets up and stumbles out of the office. The clumping of her wooden shoes is heard in the stillness.*

*Curtain.*

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